

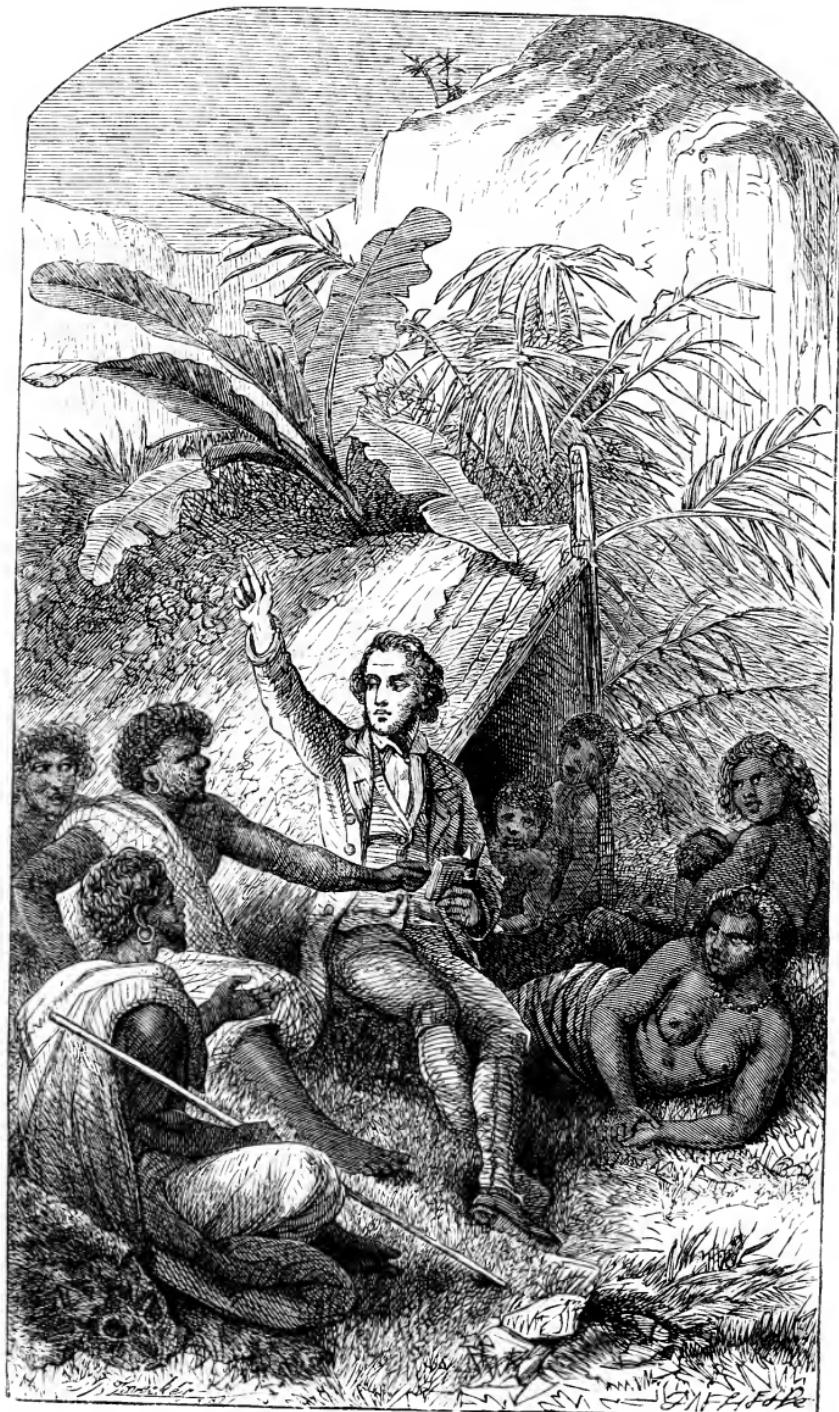


G.R. Carter

22 Oct, 1949.







THE HOSTAGE.

# LORD FITZWARINE.

BY  
“SCRUTATOR,”

AUTHOR OF “THE MASTER OF THE HOUNDS,”  
“THE SQUIRE OF BEECHWOOD,” ETC.



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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## L O R D F I T Z W A R I N E.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE mysterious disappearance of Sir Everard Hilston now requires elucidation. We left him lying apparently lifeless at the feet of Hamish, the eldest of the two gipsy brothers, whose hand still grasped the bloody knife by which the betrayer of his sister had been laid low on the earth before him. The deed was done, the thirst for vengeance gratified—yet not more still was the body of his foe than that of Hamish the gipsy, as he stood surveying the frightful work of his own hands.

“Come, Hamish,” exclaimed Abdeel, taking

his brother's arm, " we must not longer linger here ; let us place the body in the ravine, and hasten back to the tent."

Without speaking a word, he stooped to do his brother's bidding, when, on raising Sir Everard from the ground, a faint sigh escaped his breast.

" He lives !" cried Hamish, earnestly gazing on his face—" his lips move. The curse of Cain may yet be averted from my head. Quick, Abdeel ! for the hurdle in that gap yonder will carry him home to our tent—and lay him on my bed."

Not another word was spoken until the two brothers reached the tent, when all that had passed was quickly told to their father.

" It is a bloody deed, my son," said the old man, gravely, " and his blood will be required at your hand. Thou knowest the passage, ' Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' "

" What ! then" — answered Hamish — " should this Saxon make a harlot of our sister, as Sechem did of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and go unavenged ? His blood be

upon his own head ! Was not Phineas, the son of Eleazer, commended by God himself for thrusting through with his javelin Zimri and the Midianitish woman when taken in adultery ?”

“True, my son,—but Phineas did this act in his zeal for the Lord, we are told. He had no private wrongs to be redressed. The case is not so with you, my sons ; and it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.’ It may be He will hear my prayer that the stain of murder rest not on the head of my first born. But come, let us be going ; we must be far hence ere the sun again breaks over yonder hill.”

Whilst the two brothers were completing their preparations for striking their tent, the father and mother were occupied in attending to Sir Everard’s wound, who still lay motionless and unconscious of everything passing around him ; and in this state he was borne on a rude litter, on the shoulders of Hamish and Abdeel, and transported through mountain-passes to a sequestered spot several miles distant, near a rapid stream, abounding in

trout, far removed from the busy haunts of man. Here the tent of Ishmael was again erected, beneath which lay, on a lowly couch, the body of the proud and haughty Sir Everard Hilston.

The wound inflicted by Hamish proved both deep and dangerous, although no vital part had been touched ; and for days, when consciousness had returned, Sir Everard seemed hovering between life and death, tended with the care of a mother by Ishmael's wife, who watched by his bedside day and night, administering to his wants.

To his often-repeated question where he was, and what had happened, no answer was returned—her finger placed on her lips, implying that he must keep silence. But as he lay one day apparently asleep from exhaustion, the slight form of Hagar stood beside his couch ; and as she raised her eyes imploringly to Heaven, the words escaped her lips,—

“ God be praised ! He will recover.”

His eyes opened, and were riveted upon her face ; all seemed revealed,—and he asked, in a still faint voice—

"Oh ! tell me, Hagar, how came I here, and what has befallen me?"

"Hush ! silence !" she said, quickly, "I dare not tell you yet ; my mother will return directly ; you shall know more to-morrow."

At sunrise and sunset, the voice of Ishmael was heard at the tent-door, with his family around him, pouring forth praise and thanksgiving to the God of Abraham ; for Ishmael, like the patriarch of old, served the Lord, ordering his household after him to walk in the ways of his great Progenitor, the Father of the Faithful. Whilst their morning hymn was chanted by these children of the desert, the spirit of prayer descended upon the hitherto barren heart of Sir Everard Hilston ; by the solemn harmony of their voices a chord was struck which had never vibrated before. He had often listened to sacred music, in cathedral and church, unmoved, uninfluenced by its soul-stirring strains,—for his thoughts were like those of thousands—worldly, and fixed on worldly things alone. But as Sir Everard lay now, his bodily frame subdued by weakness and suffering, and his

mind humbled to the dust by the contemplation of that fate he had so richly deserved, all his past wicked thoughts and actions seemed to stand in dark array before his awakened conscience.

“Do our rude voices offend thee, stranger?” inquired Ishmael of him one morning.

“No, my friend,” replied Sir Everard, “they soothe me with their melody; I could listen to them for hours. Will you let Hagar sing to me sometimes? Her sweet voice would cheer me in my solitude.”

“Stranger,” said Ishmael, “thou art now, by the mercy of that God whose anger thou hast justly incurred, become strong enough to listen to and understand my words. I will not reproach thee; thou hast paid dearly for thine offence; but hearken to my voice: Hagar is fair to look upon as Rebecca the daughter of Laban; she is, like her too, affectionate and dutiful to her parents, and has been brought up by us in the fear of God. She is, moreover, the child of our old age, our only daughter. To satisfy thy accursed lust, thou wouldest have torn this earthly

treasure from our arms, and cast her forth a vile, polluted thing on the wide world, until, like the dove sent forth by Noah from the ark, finding no resting-place for the sole of her foot, she had returned to our shelter again, after wandering to and fro upon the earth, seeking rest and finding none, to die in penitence and peace. Is it because we dwell in tents, in obedience to our father Ishmael's commands, and thou, proud Saxon, in a large stone-built house, that thou should'st thus have dared to bring ruin and disgrace on our family, which can boast of a higher lineage than thine own? What dost thou behold in Ishmael, his wife and children, that thou should'st scorn them thus? The blood of princes and dukes runs through our veins unpolluted for generations. We can trace our origin in direct descent from our great father Abraham. What more canst thou? Thou hast lands and houses, finely-furnished rooms to dwell in, soft beds to lie upon. Under the coarse canvas is our habitation—the earth from which man was taken, and to which he must return, is our resting-place.

Yet am I not poor, as thou didst think in the wickedness of thine heart, and that our daughter's honour was to be paid for in gold. The attempt to rob her of that priceless jewel thou hast atoned for with thy blood. Enough ; tempt God no further. The daughter of Ishmael weds not with one of Saxon blood. Hagar thou shalt see no more."

Ishmael turned to leave his bedside, when Sir Everard, placing his hand upon his arm, said—

" You have not said more against me than I deserve—my intentions towards your daughter were then as you describe them,—they are changed now. Her beauty is the least attraction in my sight. Will you give me her hand in marriage? With truth and sincerity I ask this favour—let her be my wife by your own forms and ceremonies, as well as by ours of the Established Church."

" It cannot be," replied Ishmael ; " seek one of thine own race."

" No, friend Ishmael, the daughters of my race would marry me for my wealth. Hagar is not like one of these—she loved me for

myself alone, do not deny me my request."

"It cannot be granted—thou art a Moabite, to whom we must not give our daughter in marriage."

"Was not Ruth a Moabitish woman, from whom descended the royal house of Israel?" asked Sir Everard in return.

"It is true," replied Ishmael, "yet urge me no more, thou art nearly recovered, and may'st soon go hence in safety, and when once more amongst thy proud friends and companions, the tents of Kedar will be forgotten."

"Never, friend Ishmael, shall I forget that to you I am indebted for an entire change of heart, and hence I will not go without your blessing, and your daughter's hand."

"Thou shalt say no more now—I will speak to the maiden herself on this subject."

Now Ishmael and his wife were no strangers to the deep affection entertained by their youthful daughter for this proud Saxon, as they called him, whose influence they feared might still be used to take her from their

humble dwelling. They had noticed her anguish when his body was borne to the tent by her brothers, and her restless anxiety during his long illness ; and to avert a greater calamity befalling her, they resolved, after a long consultation, to comply with Sir Everard's wishes, if, on due reflection, Hagar still persisted in her attachment to this man, whom, in the innocence of her heart, she would not believe capable of acting dishonourably towards her.

It is almost needless to say that when her father, after using all the arguments he could adduce to dissuade her from marrying him in vain, asked her the solemn question, “ Wilt thou go with this man ? ” she answered meekly but firmly, “ I will go.”

Ishmael spoke not another word, for his heart was grieved at the idea of parting with his only daughter to go and live among strangers. His feelings were too deeply affected for utterance when he thought he should see her face no more.

On the morrow, Ishmael informed Sir Everard of his daughter's consent to become his

wife, although such a marriage was contrary to the rules of their tribe.

“Our willing consent thou canst not expect,” added Ishmael, “and I make the condition that thou shalt first return to thine own home for three months, at the end of which time, if thou still continuest in the same mind, we will receive thee as our son. But Hagar will not be, as thou may’st suppose, without a dowry.”

Sir Everard expressed his grateful thanks to Ishmael for his assent to his proposal, and agreed to comply with his conditions, promising to return at the time appointed and claim Hagar for his bride. He was now sufficiently recovered to leave the tent, and leaning on her arm for support, wandered amid the mountain scenery with thoughts and feelings so completely changed to the beauties of nature, as if now alive for the first time, and awakened from the grave to a new state of existence. He dwelt with still increasing admiration on the beautiful features and faultless form of this rose of the desert ; her soft silvery voice fell like music on his

ear, and though now able to travel, he could not tear himself away from her presence. For the first time in his life Sir Everard loved—and still lingered in the tent of Ishmael—“the world forgetting, by the world forgot.” Here he had all he could desire—their table in the wilderness was well supplied daily with beautiful trout from the stream, and game from the surrounding hills ; with poultry and other things they needed, from the neighbouring farm house, about two miles distant from their encampment—to the occupier of which Ishmael had been known many years, and with whom he had many dealings in cattle and horses.

Like the patriarchs of old, these gipsies still lived in primeval simplicity—their wants were few, and easily supplied. They drank of the brook, but wine, “which maketh glad” as well as fierce the heart of man, was not known in their dwelling. Ishmael was regarded as a prince or chief amongst his tribe, and although not, like Abraham, possessing flocks and herds of cattle in abundance, he had wealth in store, of which even his own

children knew not ; and still carried on a good trading business in buying and selling the common horses and rough ponies of the country, in which traffic his two sons were now employed. He also possessed two travelling vans, which contained sundry articles of a miscellaneous kind, as well as jewels and precious stones of great value ; these caravans, in bad weather, standing in place of a tent.

Ishmael stood high in character (as in stature) for his honest and fair dealings with the gentlemen and farmers near whom he sojourned ; all respected him for his integrity, and many were the visits paid him even by the highest in the land, when his tent was pitched in their neighbourhood.

Great was the consternation of his brother, and the whole household at Hawkwood, when one evening a hack carriage was driven to the door, in which sat Sir Everard Hilston ; and so astonished was the footman at his master's restoration to life, all believing him dead, that he sprung back from the carriage in affright, and rushed into the house again without

opening the door, calling the other servants to his assistance.

In the mean time Sir Everard had descended, with the help of the postilion, and reached the hall, where he stood surrounded by his domestics, amazement very vividly depicted on every face at his sudden re-appearance—but none daring to ask the question where he had been, or whence he had come; though not less changed in manner than in mien was their once proud master. To his brother's eager enquiries as to the cause of his mysterious disappearance, no other information was given than that he had left home on particular business, which had detained him much longer than he expected.

It may be supposed that Sir Everard's return to Hawkwood excited unusual curiosity amongst his neighbours to ascertain the cause of his long absence, but on this point he was impenetrable; yet all observed the extraordinary change which had been effected in his manners and conversation. The imperious, hasty, deistical man of the world had been metamorphosed into a quiet, sedate country gentle-

man. Family prayers were established at Hawkwood, which Sir Everard read morning and evening to his whole household ; his behaviour to them being now so entirely changed, so totally the reverse of what it had been, that they began to love and reverence the master they had formerly served with fear and trembling.

Sir Everard resumed his horse exercise, his favourite ride being across the moor where he had first met the youthful Hagar ; that spot had attractions which no other possessed, and strange as it now appeared, even to himself, he felt desolate and solitary in his large mansion, although surrounded by every luxury and comfort which man could desire, save one, a helpmate for him, a loved and loving partaker in all his pleasures and sorrows. His heart lingered in the tent of Ishmael, and the more he thought of the beautiful gipsy girl, the more anxious he became to obtain her as his wife.

We often see amongst men of the world the most strange, irreconcilable freaks of fancy in regard to women, even of the very worst

character ; instances continually occur of such men, not of the young and unsophisticated, but of the libertines and licentious, actually marrying women of established bad reputation —bad before they knew them, and not possessing even the outward recommendation of beauty ; and for such they brave the censure of the world, the ridicule of their friends, and exclusion from society. The infatuation of Sampson was not greater than theirs, whose vision is darkened, if their eyes are not wholly put out, by means of the witchery of these Delilahs of modern times.

Sir Everard had been a man of the world, and amongst his acquaintances could reckon three noblemen of old family and great possessions, two Baronets, and half-a-dozen Majors and Captains in the army, who had married women of bad fame ; why then should he dread taking a wife, a young, lovely girl of unblemished reputation, and far superior in personal charms to any woman he had ever seen ? But Sir Everard preserved some method in his madness, if such it could be called.— He had resolved on taking his young wife

abroad immediately after his marriage, which was to be strictly private, and improve her mind and manners by travel and cultivation, before presenting her to his neighbours as the mistress of Hawkwood ; and from her natural grace and quickness of perception, he thought a short residence in Paris would suffice for this purpose, for Hagar possessed the natural talent of her race for music, more remarkable among the gipsies of Hungary and the Continent than those of England, and often had Hagar sat at the entrance to the tent, guitar in hand, singing the songs of other lands, whilst Sir Everard stood by her side, enraptured with the melody.

The period of his probation passed so heavily, that a month before the appointed time, after making all necessary arrangements for leaving home, and directing his portmanteau to be forwarded to a certain hotel in London, Sir Everard quitted Hawkwood one morning on horseback, without any attendant, and ere the sun went down reached the tent of Ishmael. The rapturous delight of Hagar on seeing him return may be conceived ; she sprang forward

with a cry of joy to meet him, and from a complication of feelings fell almost senseless in his arms.

“ My beautiful, beloved girl,” murmured Sir Everard, “ did you think I had forgotten you ?”

“ I almost feared it,” she replied, raising her large, tearful eyes to his face.

“ I will never leave you more, my own dearly-loved Hagar,” he whispered ; “ I now come to claim you as my bride.”

Ishmael received his future son-in-law with kindness, if not cordiality ; and Sir Everard having explained to him his intention of visiting the continent for some months before returning to his country seat, obtained his consent to their marriage without further delay, which was fixed to take place in the small village church adjoining, on the fourth morning after his return.

Great was Sir Everard’s surprise next day when Ishmael, taking him into the caravan, presented him with a bag containing, in gold and bank-notes, money to the amount of five

thousand pounds, as Hagar's marriage-portion.

"I cannot deprive you of your money and of your child on the same day," replied Sir Everard, in answer to his pressing the money upon him, "I have enough and to spare, and so will Hagar, as you will see by this deed (delivering to him a short marriage-settlement). By that document, which I shall sign in your presence, your daughter will become possessed of five thousand pounds yearly, in case of my death; the whole of my other property being entailed on my eldest son and heir, should I have one."

"Thou hast been too generous, my son, in thus providing so largely for the daughter of Ishmael, whose wants, like mine, are few and simple. Beware thou spoil her not by luxuries she has never known or coveted. I give her to thee, pure and artless in mind; let her not worship at the shrine of Moloch, for at thy hands will her soul be required, if thou suffer her to be led astray by the wiles and temptations of this wicked world. Forget not, my son, the lessons thou hast been taught

in my humble dwelling, and the blessing of the God of Abraham shall rest on thy house for ever.”

“ My kind friend,” replied Sir Everard, “ I have profited by your instruction ; for every night and morning, since my return home, have I called my household together to join with me in prayer, as you do here ; and if spared to return to my native land again, you shall come and witness our mode of living, and that dear child you have entrusted to my care will I watch over with a father’s anxiety and a husband’s love.”

“ Enough, my son ; I am content.”

The night before they left the tent, Ishmael pronounced his parting benediction on Sir Everard and his daughter, as they knelt before him in the presence of his family ; and after offering up a solemn prayer for their future happiness, all retired to rest.

The next morning, Sir Everard believed himself under some optical delusion when his beautiful bride was presented to him by her mother in a magnificent wedding-dress of the finest lace, a long veil of the same costly

material fastened at the back of her head by diamonds of great value, the same precious stones glittering on her beautifully-rounded arms. Not more dazzling in her beauty did Cleopatra appear before Alexander than the youthful Hagar on the morning of their nuptials to Sir Everard Hilston.

For reasons explained previously to the clergyman of the parish, the marriage ceremony was witnessed only by Ishmael and his eldest son, the clerk's tongue being tied by the promise of a handsome present from Sir Everard, who had also ordered a carriage and pair of horses from the nearest town to be in waiting at a certain point on the high road above the village. On the conclusion of the ceremony, the party returned to the tent, and Hagar, changing her bridal attire for a travelling dress, after a fervent embrace between father and daughter, was conducted by Sir Everard to the carriage.

## CHAPTER II.

IN the meanwhile, the aspect of affairs in the village of Stanmore wore a very unfavourable appearance. Newman still continued his walks with Miss Sarah, in defiance of her parent's objections and remonstrances; for having wormed out of his deluded daughter that her money was at her sole disposal, he shook his head defiantly at the respected Vicar, and knowing that his own affairs would not bear investigation—having merely a life-interest in a small property, from which his narrow income was derived—he was fully aware that Mr. Middleton never would consent to his marrying his daughter, when it was discovered he possessed

no power of making any settlement whatsoever upon her.

Newman, having purposely quarrelled with Mr. Middleton when meeting him one day in the village, represented her father's conduct to Sarah as most insulting ; although the exact reverse was the case, Newman having addressed very gross and ungentlemanly language to her father, and being himself the aggressor. The desired rupture was thus effected, Sarah taking part with Newman against her own parents.

It became now Mr. Middleton's duty (failing to obtain any other information from Newman) to ascertain, by other means, some particulars of this man's former character and position, as well as his connections, which, on inquiry, proved worse than he had anticipated ; for although born of respectable parents, through whom he had received a good education, to prepare him for some profession, he had been early addicted to keeping low company, and had been involved in some disreputable transaction, by which he had

incurred his father's displeasure to the extent of being excluded from his house.

The distress of the poor Vicar and his wife on receiving this most unwelcome intelligence may be easily imagined ; but Miss Sarah would not believe one word said in disparagement of the man she so blindly and wilfully persisted in defending even against her own judgment.

“ How can you defend Mr. Newman’s character or conduct ? ” said Mr. Middleton almost sternly to his daughter. “ Of the former you know nothing, but of the latter you do know sufficiently already to condemn him by his own acts. He has from the beginning most grossly deceived both yourself and me by false representations about his property—detected in this falsehood, he purposely insulted me, to break off all further communication between us on this subject, and his object has been clearly to incite you to rebellion against your father. These are facts, Sarah, which you cannot disprove, and they admit of no palliation.”

“ He still persists in saying, papa, that you first insulted him.”

“ Then he persists in another falsehood, Sarah—your sister heard what passed between us—ask her.”

“ She is like you, papa, prejudiced against poor Mr. Newman, who says he has no friend left here but myself.”

“ He is an artful, designing hypocrite, Sarah, and you the most credulous dupe, to believe every falsehood he invents;—but irrespective of all natural feeling, you have read your Bible to little purpose if you do not know God’s denunciations against undutiful children.”

“ I have read there this also, papa, that ‘a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife.’ ”

“ But throughout the Old and New Testament, I defy you to quote one passage to prove that a woman is justified in despising her father by marrying a man who has declared himself his greatest enemy. The commandment is of universal application, without modification as to age—‘ Honour thy father

and mother.' Beware then of false prophets, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men—and remember Solomon's advice—‘ Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually on thine heart, and tie them about thy neck—when thou goest it shall lead thee, and when thou sleepest it shall keep thee.’ ”

To all expostulations and entreaties, reasonings, or reproofs, from father, mother, and sister, Sarah, however, turned a deaf ear. She would not listen to a word said against the man she had chosen to set up as her standard of perfection; and Newman, perceiving the influence he had now obtained over this infatuated woman, led her captive at his will, exacting a promise of marriage from her whether her parents consented or not.”

All that transpired now in her father's house was extorted from Sarah by this unprincipled man, who, by sneers and base insinuations, succeeded gradually to steel her heart against the authors of her existence.

“ Ah !” he would say, “ I know the reason

your father objects to your marrying me—he wants to sell you, my dear Sarah, to some rich man—that's the truth of the matter. He thought old Franklyn as rich as a Jew, and that was the reason he gave his consent to Caroline marrying his son, and a pretty mess he has made of it—engaged to a convicted felon ! hah ! hah !—serve him right with his worldly-mindedness—preaching to others indeed about despising the world. I shan't go to church again when he preaches. Ramsey's the man for me—he's a good sort of fellow enough—enjoys a day's shooting, and a glass of wine afterwards—he isn't a canting, puling preacher like some I could name, straining at gnats and swallowing camels."

To such reflections and insinuations against her kind father would Sarah now listen, without an attempt to defend him—all her affectionate feelings were perverted. She was exasperated because he had told her he never would sanction Newman's addresses, not on account of his want of fortune, but for

his total want of honourable, or even honest principles.

A mother's fondness for her children (especially for a daughter) generally surpasses that of a father, and Mrs. Middleton lamented with bitter tears the impending fate of her wilful but deeply-loved child,—that child now so cold and estranged from her !

Newman was no open profane sinner. He attended regularly the service of his church, as thousands, I might say millions, have done before him—to see and be seen of men,—to pray, or appear to pray. He was a churchman, not a Christian. His attitude in God's house was not that of a contrite, humble sinner meekly kneeling on his knees—he felt no humility ;—whilst others fell down in that lowly position which even the Son of God observed when addressing his Heavenly Father in prayer, Newman sat or stood erect, repeating the responses as loudly as if he were to be heard for his much speaking. His voice was raised above all other voices in that assembly—yet was not listened to beyond the portals of the church—whilst the lowest

whisperings of the poorest of the poor—the poor in spirit—were wafted through the skies, and heard at the Throne of Grace. He could utter with unmeaning lips, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,” yet bearing the most bitter hatred in his heart against his fellow-man, thus calling down a curse upon his own head ; for in asking God to forgive him, in the same proportion he did those who offended himself, he asked for no forgiveness at all, but stood forth a hardened, presumptuous sinner, provoking God’s displeasure against him. His boast was “that he never forgave any who offended him”—and this was the man Sarah Middleton was about to swear at the altar to love, honour, and obey ! Well might her mother’s tears flow fast when thinking of her daughter being united to such a man as this !

There is a strange perversity in human beings—a great many, I fear—for rushing madly, with their eyes open, on their own destruction. Their reasoning powers are thrown aside, whilst yielding their senses servants to sinful disobedience, and their own perverse

disposition, in maintaining their rights to do as they please, contrary to the dictates of their own conscience, and even evidence of their own senses. If a man throws himself into a deep well, with no one near to help him out, he safely calculates on being drowned ; but those who throw themselves into the gulf of sin seem to feel secure that no evil is to befall them. They think to throw themselves on God's mercy, after defying him, and thus hope to escape deserved punishment. But the Almighty is not thus mocked. As they sow, so will they reap. Their sins may be forgiven when truly repented of, but that repentance seldom comes until their sin has found them out—until they smart for it. The laws of nature cannot be transgressed with impunity, much less the laws of God. The broken constitution and premature decay of the libertine show also that in this world his sins have found him out, and that the re-quital for them is sure and certain. The instances are rare, indeed, where punishment does not follow, sooner or later, in this life, offences committed against the law of God,

and that punishment is generally reserved until the time when we shall feel more acutely its effect.

Disobedience and undutiful behaviour to parents is by many considered a very trivial offence ; and children, when reaching an age to think for themselves, despise their parents' counsels and admonitions, treating them with contempt. I have known many instances of girls marrying in defiance of their parents' warning, and in every case has their punishment been severe, although in many it has been reserved until their children had grown up to treat them in the same manner. Runaway matches are almost without exception productive of misery ; and although admitting that no parent has a right to dispose of his daughter's hand in marriage without her full consent, yet, by a stronger law, the daughter cannot marry in disobedience to her parents' well-founded objections, with impunity.

Sarah Middleton knew her duty ; she knew her conduct was contrary to God's law ; her conscience reproached her, as the angel did Baalam ; still, like that perverse prophet, she

would not be turned aside from her purpose ; her eyes were darkened, in that she would not see, and her heart hardened, that she would not understand. Newman's revengeful disposition was gratified when he saw this infatuated girl yielding more and more to his wishes ; and he had now completely estranged her from her family. This, however, did not suffice. His hatred against her father and mother was yet in the bud. He gloried in his wicked, despicable power of having steeled her heart against her parents. But he was now bent on injuring them by other means.

Mr. Middleton had lost all his ready money by the failure of the bank, and his tithes were payable only once a year, when it was his general custom to pay his chief tradesmen's bills. By Newman's agency, the Vicar's affairs were represented in a most unfavourable light to these people ; and the consequences followed. All wanted their money directly. Butcher, grocer, and baker had lost money too ; they could wait no longer, as usual. The poor Vicar was obliged to borrow money of a friend to meet these pressing de-

mands. Even his own child had become so hardened as to rejoice, secretly, in her father's distress, and listened quietly to Newman's threats against him. "He would ruin him! There was a mine, which wanted only his hand to explode,—and he would do it!" This may appear an unnatural picture. It is so. But it is, nevertheless, strictly true to life. It only shows how wicked the heart of man may become, when giving way to the evil passions of anger and revenge.

Newman swore in his rage he would humble Mr. Middleton, because he still persisted in refusing him as a son-in-law. This was an offence he could never forget nor forgive ; for Newman was an overbearing, insolent man ; but, like all bullies, a coward at heart.

## CHAPTER III.

SOME time has now elapsed since we left Herbert Franklyn in a prison, to undergo his sentence. He had now become pale and emaciated from confinement and want of air, his spirits broken by anguish of mind, although occasionally visited by Mr. Middleton and his daughter Caroline ; other friends and acquaintances kept aloof. Three years' continuance in his dreary cell now appeared to Herbert Franklyn a long, dismal period, the end of which he should scarcely live to see, and were he to survive it, every avenue to advancement in business or a profession would be closed against him. He was a convicted felon, separated from his fellow-men by a

mark set upon his head, like that of Cain, that all who saw him would avoid him. How, under such circumstances, could he indulge the hope of ever marrying Caroline Middleton? Could he drag her down to his own level of misery and degradation? The thought was distraction! But she would not be released from her engagement—she would remain constant, unwavering in her faith and love to him, although, in the eyes of the world, a condemned criminal. Hope filled her young and sanguine heart — hope in a bright future, despite the threatening clouds that were now around them. She knew his innocence—that was enough. But had his guilt been as clear as the sun at noonday, Caroline would not have deserted him even then.

Whilst thus indulging the most gloomy thoughts, almost overwhelmed by despondency, a letter reached Herbert Franklyn, in an unknown hand, containing these few words only, but inclosing a note for a hundred pounds:—

“Do not despair—there is one rich and powerful who will obtain your release, and

set you up in the world. Accept this sum as an earnest of his good intentions."

This letter bore the Heddington post-mark, and Herbert concluded therefore it was written by some kind-hearted friend to cheer him in his solitude; the money it contained being probably raised by subscription amongst his former associates.

He had now to undergo one of the most severe trials he had ever experienced, by the death of his father, who had been gradually declining in health, and died literally of a broken heart. From the day of Herbert's committal to prison, he had never been seen to smile, and the sentence pronounced upon the son was the death-blow dealt to the father also.

The iron entered into his soul when he reflected that to serve others and himself, he had been induced to accept the sacrifice of his only and beloved son. To this unworthy purpose Chaffman had been the chief instigator, simply because it accorded with his own views; and by his plausible arguments, with the assurance of his power to obtain

through Lord Lessingham a remission of his sentence, the father was persuaded in an evil hour to do violence to every feeling of his heart, by consenting to his son occupying the place he ought to have filled. In fact, Herbert was *entirely* innocent of the crime imputed to him.

True, he had received the draft from Sir Everard Hilston, but he had scarcely left the bank parlour by one door into the street through the counting-house, before the elder Franklyn entered by another private one, who had that morning received a most urgent call from the Liverpool agent in the ship-building concern, informing him that unless a certain sum was sent to him immediately, he should be compelled to stop the works. Perplexed and worried what to do, his father took up Sir Everard's draft from the table (it had not been entered yet in the ledger), and unknown to him, it was that day forwarded to Liverpool.

Now Chaffman knew all about this transaction, but he knew also that there would be no evidence of it before the trial, the agent

and himself having come to an understanding on this point; and a particular friend of his own being one of the assignees to wind up the concern; so that the accounts would not be made public until after Herbert's trial and condemnation.

The truth had now come out, and the shame and confusion on its being disclosed, added to his sorrow and bitter reflections, put the finishing stroke to his father's miserable existence.

Herbert grieved for his death, as a son so dutiful and affectionate would, and that grief was enhanced by a confession drawn up and signed by his father, in presence of one of the committing magistrates two days previous to his decease, whereby his son was exonerated from all implication or knowledge of the appropriation of Sir Everard's money.

These things had occurred during Sir Everard's return from the gipsy camp, who, conscience-stricken by the unworthy motives which had actuated him in prosecuting Herbert Franklyn, now resolved to use every means in his power to procure a remission of

his sentence. The breach between himself and George Medwin being healed, the latter was solicited to obtain all the necessary proofs of Herbert Franklyn's innocence, which were to be forwarded to the Home Secretary by Lord Lessingham, and backed by Sir Everard as prosecutor, could not fail of success. The anonymous letter received by Herbert, with its contents, had also been sent by Sir Everard ; and within a month of his father's decease an order arrived for the release of the son from his prison walls.

The joy of poor Caroline on his restoration to liberty and life (for Herbert's constitution had already begun to give way under confinement and perpetual despondency of mind) may be imagined by those who have received one most dear, restored to them from the brink of the grave. But greater was her surprise when, a few days after, Sir Everard Hilston was announced, who requested to see her alone.

With a complication of contending feelings, she entered the room into which he had been shown by the servant, but one look at his

now pale features and subdued manner told her she had nothing to fear.

“I am come,” he said, advancing towards her with extended hand, “to ask your forgiveness for the gross outrage I once committed against you, which I now regard with horror and remorse. Since then, thank God, my heart has been changed, and I look back with loathing and humiliation on that scene, when, in my own house, I treated one so young and artless with such revolting brutality. My base, unfeeling conduct towards you on that occasion has haunted me ever since, and I now come to make you every reparation in my power. Can you forgive me for such an offence?”

“Yes, Sir Everard, I can, and do forgive you, and most happy am I to hear of your change of heart,” replied Caroline, rather formally.

“I thank you, Miss Middleton, most truly, even for this cold reception, to which I am not entitled; but now if you can tolerate me in your presence a few minutes, and take a

seat, the object of my visit shall be explained."

Sir Everard then told her of his former hatred against Herbert Franklyn, on account of her preference for him, and his fiendish determination to humble her for despising his suit; but that through his mediation he had now been restored to liberty.

"And now, Miss Middleton," continued Sir Everard, "not to dwell longer on this subject, painful alike to us both, I come to offer to your father the living I once promised him, which has just become vacant; and also an appointment as agent for my landed property in the same parish, and others adjoining, with a good house, and five hundred a-year to your affianced husband, Herbert Franklyn, if he will do me the favour to accept this, or any other which it may be in my power to procure for him."

Poor Caroline could express only by tears her sense of Sir Everard's kindness, which noticing, he rose, and taking her hand, said—

"Caroline, if you really do forgive me for what has passed, you will not, must not, re-

fuse, for your father and Herbert Franklyn, these my offers of reconciliation and atonement. To-morrow I will call again; but remember, I will take no refusal—for if your father declines the living, I must give it to some one else, perhaps not half so worthy as himself, and Herbert Franklyn can resign my agency when he hears of a better appointment; so neither of them will receive any great favour at my hands. In fact, the agency is yours, to do as you please with—house and furniture—and if he is too proud to accept it," he added with a smile, "you can select another husband to fill it up."

On her father's return, Caroline sprang forward with the joyful look of her former self to tell of Sir Everard's visit and his kind offer; and on his expressing a doubt of his good intentions, fearing some lurking evil behind the scenes, she exclaimed—

"Oh, papa, he is so changed, you will scarcely know him again;" and she entered into a full description of his altered looks and behaviour.

"Then God be praised," replied the Vicar,

“ that he has renounced his evil thoughts and ways ; but I must have time to reflect before I accept his offer of preferment.”

“ So you will, dear papa, this whole afternoon and night ; but now, if not too tired, will you go with me to Herbert Franklyn, for I cannot rest until he hears this good news, which will cheer him more than the greatest riches ; the very act of Sir Everard offering him this appointment will at once re-establish his character with the world.”

Herbert, like her father, appeared at first the reverse of overjoyed by Sir Everard’s offer, and expressed great repugnance to accept any favour at his hands.

“ You know, my dear Caroline,” he remarked, “ that, independent of other considerations, Sir Everard has experienced a great loss through our failure, which it may never be in my power to repay.”

“ That is very true, Herbert, but you forget this sum was offered him again by your friends to forego his prosecution, which he peremptorily refused, preferring the gratification of revenge to the acceptance of the money. He

has had his revenge, and you know the misery it has entailed on us all ; and but for the clear establishment of your innocence, your life would also have been sacrificed. All your obligations to him have been cancelled, yet were the case not so, you may, by accepting this appointment, have it in your power to render him great services by the careful management of his estates. You have often expressed a wish to be engaged in agricultural pursuits, and have some knowledge of farming ; moreover, change of scene and air will, I trust, soon re-establish you in health. Why then, dear Herbert, should you refuse to comply with my earnest entreaties, to accept this appointment, which is offered to me, not yourself ? Do not, if you love me, refuse it, for to me it appears an intervention of Providence, to publish your innocence to the world.”

By these and other arguments Caroline at last succeeded in overcoming Herbert Franklyn’s scruples, who concluded by saying—

“ Well, my dearest Caroline, I will not add to the misery you have already suffered on

my account, by opposing your wishes ; I will accept Sir Everard's agency."

"And in that case," added the Vicar, "I must also accept the living of Cotsgrove, to be near you, my own dear, dutiful child."

"Oh ! how happy you have made me, my dear kind father," replied Caroline, as she was pressed to his heart in a warm embrace ; "we may all, I trust, see brighter days."

"May God grant your prayer, my dear Caroline ; and now, having obtained your desire, we must wish Herbert good night."

The next morning, Mr. Middleton waited at home to receive Sir Everard, with whom he had a long conversation, and from which he believed him so entirely changed, that he no longer hesitated to accept the benefice offered, the tithes of which amounted to nearly twice as much as those of Stanmore, with a superior parsonage house, and a hundred acres of glebe land ; in expressing his thanks for which he was cut short by Sir Everard saying—

"I and the parish are in this case, my kind friend, the obliged persons ; and it is the

greatest comfort to me to know that I have discharged one duty at least to God and my fellow men, by intrusting the souls of this parish to your care. And now, dear Mr. Middleton, if your daughter, Caroline, will comply also with my request, I shall return home a happier man than I have felt to be for years past."

We need not say how gratefully this was complied with ; but we ought to say, that happy as Mr. Middleton and his daughter were, the happiness of Sir Everard as he rode home, in the contemplation of having done two worthy actions, far exceeded theirs.

At Caroline's request, Herbert Franklyn rode over to Hawkwood the day following, to thank Sir Everard in person for his appointment. The meeting between them was, as it may be supposed, at first constrained ; but as each surveyed the person of the other, so changed since their last meeting, a feeling of sympathy gradually crept over the heart of each, and the manly avowal of Sir Everard dispelled at once from the mind of Franklyn

any latent doubt of his former rival's sincerity of purpose.

"Herbert Franklyn," he said, "I have injured you more in thought and deed than I dare confess. My guilt is confined to my own breast. It is my duty and earnest desire to repair, in some measure, the mischief I have done you and yours. The agency I now offer you is merely a stepping-stone to further advancement, by accepting which, you will enable me to prove to the world that you have forgiven my base conduct on your trial, and that of that forgiveness you have not thought me undeserving, by accepting this agency. For my sake, Franklyn, if it be possible, try to forget the past. And now you must come here again to-morrow and dine with me, as my stay at Hawkwood will be short; and I must give you the necessary information as to the property you have to superintend."

Sir Everard, now thoroughly awakened to a sense of the utter worthlessness of his past life, sought out every opportunity of doing good, as he had formerly for doing evil, in obedience to his selfish ideas and passions.

The living of Stanmore was also in his gift, which, from the representation made to him of Mr. Ramsey's pious exertions in the parish, and excellent character as a clergyman, he, without hesitation, offered to him, as soon as Mr. Middleton was inducted into his new preferment, which Mrs. Fitzwarine, now almost despairing of her son's return, pressed him to accept, urging upon him the necessity of not neglecting this opportunity of using the talents committed to his care, for the benefit of his fellow-beings.

" You will ever, my dear Mr. Ramsey," she said, " find a home here ; and I cannot dispense with your services, as my kind friend and chaplain, which will not be incompatible with your other duties. So, to oblige me, you must not decline Sir Everard's offer."

It might have been expected that Mrs. Fitzwarine, believing her son would have selected his dearest friend to supply his place, to whom it was in her power to bequeath the Abbey property, should, with this view, desire his continuance at the Abbey. But, besides, the still latent hope in the mother's heart, that

her son might be restored to her, Florence had now become the child of her adoption, and to her, as Hugh's affianced wife, she had already determined to bequeath the greatest part of her property.

We must now leave Mr. Middleton and Herbert Franklyn, busy in their preparations for quitting that part of the country for a wider field of action (the latter having induced his mother to let her house for a twelvemonth, and reside with him until his marriage with Caroline, or longer, as she might feel disposed), and Miss Pringle in full enjoyment of her gossip on the extraordinary events which had just occurred in the village of Stanmore.

## CHAPTER IV.

CHAFFMAN continued to be received still very favourably to his views at Forest Lodge, Florence indulging the hope that through his means some intelligence might be gained of her missing lover; but the crafty lawyer, seeing how matters stood, and that so long as a hope lingered in her heart of Hugh Fitzwarine's preservation, so long would his object be deferred of creating a diversion in his favour, he now (after the lapse of time sufficient to obtain an answer) brought her a letter, as received from his cousin at the Cape, at the end of which it was mentioned "that the boat of the Juno had been discovered, broken to

pieces on the shore, and the crew were supposed to have been drowned, as no tidings had been heard of them among the natives." And thus perished the last spark of hope in the breast of Florence Seaton !

Chaffman, observing the effect produced by this communication, immediately withdrew, on the plea of a pressing engagement, and did not again make his appearance at Forest Lodge for more than a week.

Lieutenant Carleton continued his daily attentions to Clara, having obtained Lady Metcalfe's consent to his marriage with her daughter, whom he had gone to London expressly to see ; and as the lovers were so extremely impatient of delay, it was decided that the ceremony should be performed in six weeks, at the fashionable chapel in Hanover Square.

Cupid, with his bow and quiver, makes sad havoc among human hearts by his mischievous pranks, sending here and there an arrow, just as it may suit his childish play ; and here, in the case of Clara and Carleton, he had shot

two simpletons at the first drawing of his bow.

Carleton knew nothing of Clara, except that she was a pretty girl, and possessed an extraordinary power of fascination; and Clara knew nothing of Carleton, save his being a handsome man.

Would Carleton have taken a groom without first making inquiries into his character? Would he have bought a horse without a warranty? Would he have accepted as sole companion on a grousing expedition to Scotland a stranger of whose character and temper he knew nothing? I believe he would not. Now the servant he could discharge by a month's warning, if bad-tempered, drunken, or dishonest. The horse he could return if vicious or unsound, or sell again; and he might part company with his grouse-shooting acquaintance, if their dispositions did not suit, on the road or on the moor. But what could he do with a wife, his companion for life, if she did not suit him? He could not take her on trial for a month, like a servant or a horse; but, after a fortnight's acquaintance,

he makes the blind bargain—to take her for better, for worse, till death them do part—without the slightest knowledge of her character, disposition, or principles.

Would any man of sense call this by any other name than a fool's bargain—his only excuse being that he fell in love with her at first sight?

What is love at first sight? For a woman, or anything else, a fancy or preference we feel for a beautiful object. This is natural enough; we should like to possess it. But would it not be considered little short of madness, in the common transactions of life, to purchase houses or lands, goods or chattels, pictures or jewels, dogs or horses, at any price, without first ascertaining their real value? There is no such thing as *love* at first sight. There may be great attraction, or desire, for a beautiful girl on first beholding her, and by indulging this preference or desire without control, love or passion begins to take possession of the heart, darkening our mental vision, and bringing all our other senses into subjection to its power.

What is the use of reason, if it is not to save us from follies like this? We surely ought to argue somewhat after this fashion : “ Well, that girl is exceedingly handsome, very ladylike in appearance, a beautiful figure, &c. &c.; in short, precisely the person I should select as a wife, in outward form, and I am half in love with her already.” Reason would whisper, “ Then don’t fall wholly in love with her, without knowing first whether she is lovable or not. Don’t take all for gold that glitters. The beautiful tint on her cheeks may be put on; the glossy ringlets not her own, &c.” But, supposing the young lady does not sail under false colours, and is correct in form and fashion, without being redolent of *perfumes*, the smell of which is sufficient to keep any man at arms’ length, as suggestive of the caution, *noli me tangere*—why or wherefore I am not at liberty to disclose; but I have ever entertained a very decided antipathy to otto of roses, musk, *et hoc genus omne*, and I shall only add, “ *Hæc tu Romane caveto.*”

Well, taking it as granted that the object

of attraction is faultless as to external appearance, a sensible man (before allowing himself to be over head and ears in love with her) would first ascertain whether she had been in love before, or engaged to any other man. Then he would find out, from inquiries or personal observation, her character and disposition—whether of good temper, chaste and modest ideas, having a kind heart, sensible in conversation, and not addicted to flirtation ; and if satisfied on these points, he may fall as desperately in love with her as it may please him ; and the chances are in favour of his being happy with her when married. A vain or rash man acts by the contrary rule—that is by misrule. He permits himself to be knocked down by his charmer without striking a blow. He gives way at once to passion, invests the object of his blind idolatry with divine perfections, and after being married a few months, his eyes are unpleasantly opened to a few startling realities. “ By Gad ! ” he soliloquizes, “ Belinda has an awful temper of her own ; who would have thought it ? — flirted like the diable with that French count last night ! Has a new dress every week ;—with a bill as long as my arm

already for jewellery at Turner's. Must be out every night at some place of amusement —opera, theatre, or ball, with half-a-dozen fellows dancing attendance upon her wher-ever she goes. By Gad, sir, you are a ruined man ! She's a fine, handsome, fashionable woman, no doubt ; but as to being divinely beautiful, she certainly is not that now ; and what am I to do with her during the winter months, at my old place in the country ? Hasn't an idea of domestic economy or domestic happiness ; can talk of nothing but balls, parties, dress, &c. Egad, Captain, you have made an egregious fool of yourself!"

Carleton was rapidly realising the character of the rash man. Clara appeared to him at first a divinity in petticoats ;—Juno, Venus, or Hebe, as represented in the heathen mythology, not to be compared with her for her beauty—and this delusion lasted for five weeks and three days. She was now in London at her mother's house—Carleton at a fashionable hotel. It was the close of the London season—wedding-ring, wedding-dress, wedding-cake, are provided—bridesmaids se-

lected—aristocratic friends and acquaintances invited to a grand breakfast on the morning of the nuptials.

The morning arrived. The blushing bride had reached the fashionable chapel, surrounded by her bridesmaids and a large party of friends, to witness the ceremony. The bridegroom had not yet made his appearance. Where could he be?—all were waiting for him impatiently—it was half-past eleven. The bride looked pale—the lady mamma indignant—and her two brothers quite fero-cious.

The eldest suddenly quitted the chapel, got into a cab, and returned just ten minutes before the clock struck twelve. All eyes were fixed upon him as he hastily advanced to his mother, and whispered, “Carleton left London last night.”

Lady Metcalfe had sufficient control over herself to suppress all show of temper before her friends, merely saying there must have been some mistake in the day, as Captain Carleton was not at his hotel, and had gone out for a drive.

Clara of course fainted away, and whilst her bridesmaids were busy with their Eau de Cologne bottles, the assembled friends stole quietly out of the chapel, exchanging ominous looks, which implied that there must have been some very great *mistake* indeed, or something worse.

Nothing was heard of Carleton for a month, when he returned to London. Clara's brothers called upon him for an explanation of his insulting conduct to their sister. He positively refused to give any. The eldest brother called him out, and had a shot at him—Carleton fired his pistol in the air. The second brother then had a shot at him, with the like result. His strange conduct became public—his brother officers looked shy upon him. Carleton was in a fix, but he would not leave his regiment, although recommended by the Colonel to exchange or sell out. He had one course only to pursue. He called upon the Commander-in-Chief, with whom he had a private and confidential interview, which resulted in a letter being addressed to his Colonel to this effect:—that, “The Com-

mander-in-Chief, being perfectly satisfied with Lieutenant Carleton's explanation to him on a recent affair, requested he might be received as usual by his brother officers."

There were naturally many surmises not very favourable to the young lady on this most untoward event ; but Carleton cut short all further remarks by saying that he would call any man out, and shoot him too, if he could, who should broach the subject again in his presence.

We are now in the month of September. Herbert Franklyn, with his mother, has taken possession of his new house at Cotsgrove, as agent for Sir Everard Hilston, and from having plenty of healthful occupation in riding over the several farms, his strength of mind and body is beginning to return. Mr. Middleton had preached his farewell sermon in the parish church of Stanmore,—where scarcely a dry eye could be seen ; his text being taken from the Book of Samuel—"Behold, here I am witness against me before the Lord ; whose ox or whose ass have I taken, or whom have I defrauded or oppressed?" From

this he took a review of the twenty years he had passed amongst them, endeavouring to discharge his duty faithfully towards God and man, in the words of the prophet Samuel, "teaching them the right way;" and at the conclusion of a most affecting and affectionate discourse, when he bade them as their pastor a long farewell, trusting to their re-union in a better world, the congregation, as one man, lifted up their voices and wept; for with the exception of Newman, Mr. Middleton was respected and loved by every individual in the parish, for his zealous and conscientious discharge of his many duties, setting them a bright example by his humility and truly Christian feelings, worthy of imitation.

Mr. Middleton, on taking the living, had found his parishioners distracted by broils and dissensions, dissenting ministers of nearly every creed having crept in among them, Wesleyans, Ranters, Baptists, and Jumpers, so that the church had become nearly deserted. The former Vicar, considering he had sufficiently discharged his duty by preaching two sermons on a Sunday, without visiting his

parishioners unless sent for to read prayers by a death-bed, on a week day, had by this neglect allowed the wolves in sheeps' clothing to steal into the flock—the blind leading the blind into the ditch. Apparently to avoid collision with the church-going people, the chapels were opened at an early hour on Sunday morning, so that their service was over before that of the church began ; and again at six in the evening, considered the fashionable hour, when all the young farm servants and labourers, male and female, attended, dressed in their Sunday's best ; and the pranks carried on in the grand conventicle, (to which some of the second class farmers had become contributors), during the autumnal and winter months, forbids description.

The doctrine of faith was preached to these misguided people, until they believed that no matter what sins they committed, faith alone would save them ; and they continued in this belief until, out of the whole congregation, scarcely one honest man or virtuous girl, above the age of sixteen, could have been found. To the old regime, some exceptions

may be fairly taken. The clergy of past times were less outwardly zealous in their calling, and one great dereliction of duty may be charged against them, that of not visiting the poor in their own houses for the purpose of instruction. But their bounties and charities were seldom wanting to the destitute and distressed, and their sermons, if plain, were in strict conformity with the word of God.

They taught that “Faith without works is dead”—that by good works and charitable deeds faith or trust in God could alone be shown. It was by Mr. Middleton’s unwearied exertions, by his kind pleading voice and manner, by his forbearing Christian practice, and his unflinching perseverance in teaching them the right way, that the people began again to flock to their legitimate place of worship, perceiving the fallacy of those ignorant, self-sufficient preachers who had led them astray. The Ebenezer and Bethesda chapels were at length shut up.

A few days previous to Mr. Middleton bidding adieu to his parishioners of Stan-

more, his daughter Sarah set off for York, on a visit to a distant relative, from whose house she was married a month after to Newman.

## CHAPTER V.

AFTER Clara Metcalfe's departure from Forest Lodge, Florence Seaton sank into her former state of listless despondency. The world was to her a bleak, barren desert, in which no object appeared to interest her, save her mother and poor Mrs. Fitzwarine, who was as wretched as herself; and these two, the only beings for whose sake she still wished to live. Sinclair's regiment was sent out to India—they might never meet again; and although tenderly attached to him as a cousin, her heart revolted at the idea of marriage.

Mrs. Seaton, alarmed at her daughter's continued depression, did all in her power to

alleviate her sorrow, and again proposed a visit to the seaside, which Florence firmly resisted. At her request, however, Caroline Middleton (now restored to health and spirits by Herbert Franklyn's release) was invited to spend a short time at the Lodge.

The equinoctial gales had now commenced, the weather being stormy and cold. Mrs. Seaton, on returning from a drive one afternoon, complained of being very chilly, and retired early to her room. She became alarmingly ill the next day, from an inflammatory attack on the chest. The doctor was sent for, who prescribed the usual remedies, in those times, of bleeding and blistering. The inflammation abated, but did not subside. The next night she became worse, further medical aid was called in, and Florence sat by her bedside until the morning, administering with her own hand the remedies prescribed. For some days she continued in a state almost hopeless of recovery. The doctor feared the worst, and Mrs. Seaton, believing her end approaching, sent for Chaffman to make her will.

Her directions were brief — bequeathing everything to her daughter, whom she lamented bitterly to leave in such an unprotected state. Chaffman protested she should never want a friend whilst he lived ; he would be her brother, guardian, and protector. He had always admired and loved her, and but for the difference of age and position, would have laid himself and fortune at her feet. If Miss Seaton would accept of his humble suit, his life should be devoted to make her happy.

A smile illumined the wan features of the unhappy mother as Chaffman ceased speaking. He would not excite her then by saying more on a subject so painful, and trusted to find her better the next day.

Mrs. Seaton became more composed when Chaffman was gone ; her mind was relieved from a load of anxiety on her child's account. Florence entered her room directly after, fearing she would be worse from this distressing interview with her solicitor, and to her question how she felt, Mrs. Seaton replied—

“ Much happier now, my own darling

child. There is only one other wish, and I could feel contented to die."

"Oh! what is that?" asked Florence, kneeling by the bedside, "tell me, my own dearest mother."

"Florence," she said, sadly, "all my bitter thoughts are about you—leaving you alone in this wicked, heartless world. There is one, however, who has long loved you, and to whose care I could safely entrust your happiness. Would you consent to become his wife, my last earthly wish would be gratified, and I could feel happy."

"Then be happy, my own dearest mother," replied Florence, bending over and kissing her pale cheek; "I promise to comply with your wish. But pray now—take this cooling draught, and try to sleep, if only for a few minutes."

Exhausted in body, and relieved in mind, Mrs. Seaton fell into a heavy slumber, partly caused by the opiate she had taken, and awoke greatly refreshed. The fever had at last somewhat abated, and the doctor on calling expressed a hope she might recover,

with great care. Florence felt she had saved her mother ! Oh ! the delight of that thought—that she might still live ! She would have sacrificed her own life fifty times over, if possible, to save her mother's. She did not ask the name of the man she wished her to marry ; she had learnt from her wanderings who he was. Her mother had talked of Chaffman in her sleep—of her marriage with him,—and laughed with joy at her daughter's happiness.

Florence shuddered at that wild laugh ; but not for the world should her mother know her real feelings.

“ Oh ! let her life be spared !—let her once more be restored to me !” muttered this devoted girl, “ I care for nothing beyond ; I have now only her happiness to consult—all else is a blank to me.”

The next morning the doctor called again. He told Florence her mother was still better—wonderfully improved ; a most extraordinary change, he said, had been effected within the last twenty-four hours. The restless, wandering look had disappeared, as if some load had

been removed from her mind. He could not account for this sudden alteration. She was to be kept perfectly quiet—no one to be admitted to her room, on any account—neither Mr. Chaffman nor Mr. Ramsey—not a soul but herself. It was the first really happy moment Florence had felt since her mother's illness.

She gave directions to old Donald accordingly, who observed them to the letter. Chaffman called soon after, and, without ceremony, walked into the drawing-room, having put his horse into the stable. No one was there ; he waited some time ; no one entered. He became fidgety, took up a newspaper, looked at it, put it down again on the table ; sat down in an arm-chair for a few seconds, sprang up, and began poking the fire. Some say this is a certain proof that a man feels himself at home in a friend's house ; but Chaffman did not feel himself at home or at ease ; he felt just the contrary ; he was in a fuss—in a flurry. He walked to the window and looked out, humming a tune. He looked

at his watch ! it was twelve o'clock ;—he had an engagement at one.

“ Can't wait any longer,” he muttered, and pulled the bell.

Donald appeared.

“ How is Mrs. Seaton this morning ?”

“ Much better, I am thankful to say, sir.”

“ Will you let her know I am here ?” said Chaffman, surveying himself in the glass, and giving a twirl to one of his whiskers.

“ You canna see my leddy to-day,” replied Donald.

“ Why not ?” asked Chaffman, turning sharply round.

“ Doctor's orders,” said Donald, very dryly. He could not endure Chaffman.

“ But I am here by appointment ; Mrs. Seaton wished to see me particularly this morning, and I desire you will let her know I am waiting.”

“ I shall do nothing of the kind, Mr. Chaffman,” replied Donald very firmly. “ The doctor's orders must be obeyed.”

“ Will you tell Miss Seaton, then, I am here ?”

"Na," said Donald, "she is sitting by my leddy's bedside, and canna be disturbed by visitors."

Chaffman looked unutterables at old Donald, who smiled at his discomfiture. Chaffman got very red in the face, and saying "very well" in a haughty tone, which meant "very ill" against Donald, he stalked out of the room, Donald opening the hall door, which Chaffman heard him lock as he placed his foot on the second step.

"Confound that impudent old Scotchman!" muttered the lawyer, as he strode away indignantly to the stables, "I'll be even with him some day for his insolence."

Mrs. Seaton slowly yet steadily improved; the feverish symptoms had disappeared, but leaving her so weak and emaciated that the doctor told Florence she still required the greatest possible care. Florence saw this too, and her whole thoughts and time were devoted to her mother. This constant occupation of mind and body prevented her dwelling on the fate of Hugh Fitzwarine, as she had previously. She had one absorbing, engross-

ing interest now,—she nursed and tended her mother, as that mother had once attended upon her when a child—she watched every improved look, and hailed with rapturous delight every faint smile that passed across her mother's face.

Mrs. Seaton was now able to sit up an hour or two during the day. Chaffman had called twice since, but he could not walk into the drawing-room as before. Donald kept the hall-door locked, and to his enquiries about seeing his mistress, the same answer was returned, “She could not be seen.”

A month had now passed since Mrs. Seaton's first attack; she was gradually gaining strength, but the doctor said she must not venture down stairs for fear of catching fresh cold, as her cough was still very troublesome; another room was therefore prepared adjoining her own, where Florence remained with her the greatest part of the day. Mrs. Seaton still entertained an unfavourable opinion of herself; she suffered from pain in her side, and the doctor had told her a relapse from flesh cold might baffle all his skill.

She understood his meaning, and when sitting one evening with Florence, alluded to the subject, and again began agitating herself about her daughter's unprotected state, should her illness return, which she feared would prove fatal. Florence in vain attempted to combat with her mother's apprehensions.

"My own dearest mother," she said, "pray do not fret about me, I could not long survive you, and if I did, I should have more than sufficient to supply all my wants;—pray do not renew this painful subject, we both ought to feel thankful you are so much better."

Mrs. Seaton said no more, but passed a restless night. She was feverish and flushed the next morning. Florence became again alarmed. The doctor called; he told her something had gone amiss with her mother; her pulse was very high—all exciting subjects must be avoided—did she know what had caused this change? Florence suspected it, and told him her mother had excited herself by talking on some family affairs.

"Let me then beg of you, my dear Miss Seaton, as you value your mother's life, not

to renew any unpleasant subject, for your utmost endeavours must be used to soothe her; comply with her wishes, whatever they may be, for the present, and do not contradict her in any way."

Florence promised ready obedience. The same evening her mother commenced eulogising Chaffman,—“Kind, good, excellent man!”

Florence, knowing to what this would lead, cut short the topic by saying—

“Dearest mamma, I know you wish me to accept Mr. Chaffman—I will do so, if that will make you happy.”

“I feared you disliked him, my dear child.”

“No, dear mamma, I have no reason to dislike him, and he appears very kind-hearted—all are now the same to me. Again I repeat, and pray do not renew the subject, for I see how it agitates and makes you worse—I will marry Mr. Chaffman if you wish it—I promise you to do so.”

“May I tell him so?” her mother asked in a trembling voice.

“Yes, dearest mamma, if that will afford

you any comfort ; but on one condition do I make that promise, that he does not presume on any further intimacy than that now existing between us, until the wedding-day—you know my heart has been given to another—that is all I ask."

Mrs. Seaton rose, and kissing her daughter, said she had made her feel quite happy in complying with her only wish, and Florence soon after sought her own room, where she gave way to the anguish of her heart.

Again Mrs. Seaton rallied, and in a few days became so much better, that when Chaffman called, he was admitted to her morning room, from which Florence fled on hearing him ascending the stairs.

On learning from Mrs. Seaton that her daughter had given her consent to become his wife, Chaffman was in ecstasies of delight, vowing eternal gratitude and devotion to them both.

" But there is one condition, my dear sir," added Mrs. Seaton, " with which you must comply. You know her delicacy of feeling, and her recent disappointment, how she

mourns for Mr. Fitzwarine. She is still far from well, you had better not speak to her on this subject yet, or presume on your new position, it would be too precipitate."

"I quite understand you, my dearest madam, and will respect Miss Seaton's feelings."

A knock at the door cut short further remarks, and a maid entered with a jelly in her hand sent by Florence, to prevent her mother being agitated by a longer interview, when Chaffman rose and withdrew.

The winter months passed drearily away to poor Florence. It was now February, and Mrs. Seaton was permitted to take her usual place by the drawing-room fire. Chaffman was, of course, a frequent visitor; and Florence had become accustomed to him; in fact, from his extreme caution and respectful behaviour towards her, she began to think she had sometimes received him with too much reserve, for only once had he alluded to what had passed in her mother's sick room, now some months ago, when he said his future life should be devoted to her happiness.

Florence blushed deeply, and merely replied that to promote her mother's happiness was now her only desire.

Chaffman knew what that implied, and remembering the conditions, did not presume even to take her hand, and that deference he had to this time preserved; so the heart of Florence began to be a little softened towards him. The next time he called she received him more cordially, and saw a pleased expression pass over her mother's face; she conversed also with him in a more cheerful tone. She would, however, advance no further, still hoping that her mother might soon be restored to perfect health, and then her promised engagement might be broken off, or deferred, at least, some time.

Chaffman had now become impatient to clutch his prey; he was tired of this unpleasant courtship; it did not suit him to wait much longer; he had pressing reasons for being married soon, which none but himself as yet knew. Delays would be dangerous. He had a long conversation with Mrs. Seaton on the subject. He told her he had

arranged to be in Paris by the end of March, where he should be detained some few days on business of some consequence, previously to winding up his affairs.

He had then to proceed to Rome on a like mission, after which he should return to Ashton Hall. Could she prevail on her daughter to let their marriage take place some time on or before the twenty-third of March, he should then be enabled to show her everything worth seeing at Paris and Rome; and he felt quite sure she would be restored to perfect health and spirits by travelling and change of scene. At any rate, his journey could not be deferred, and it was uncertain when he might return.

Mrs. Seaton was prevailed upon to comply with his wishes, which were very much in accordance with her own. She thought Florence would be greatly benefited by change of air and scene; and one of her maxims was, that when a marriage was once decided upon, the sooner it took place the better for all parties concerned. She was, moreover, fully persuaded in her own mind, that when her

daughter was married, she would consider it her duty to banish the past, if possible, from her recollection. Her thoughts would at once be occupied with other feelings, and other duties, consequent upon her change of state. Probably she might become a mother herself ; then she would love her husband for her child's sake, if not for his own. Less than twelve months might effect this change, and she would then become a happy and contented wife.

Thus reasoned Mrs. Seaton, and thus reason mothers generally, how fallaciously I need not stop now to inquire. Florence had been following slowly, like a wild duck into a decoy net, by complying with her mother's wishes ; and she now felt escape almost impossible, from the net being drawn so suddenly around her.

To her surprise, the next day Mrs. Seaton first hinted at Mr. Chaffman's intentions of going abroad for some weeks the end of March.

"I think, my dear child," she then continued, "this would be a favourable oppor-

tunity for you to see something more of the continent, and I should have the satisfaction of beholding your return in good health and spirits before another winter commences, through which I fear, from my continued cough, I shall never pass."

"I did not expect, dearest mamma, you would wish me to leave you so soon," making a strong effort to suppress her tears.

"Neither do I, my dearest child—but having made up your mind to marry Mr. Chaffman, the sooner it is over the better ; and he has promised to let you remain with me the autumn and winter months, or take up his residence here altogether, if I so desire, as he could easily let Ashton Hall at a high rent."

Florence pleaded her mother's ill health as a good and sufficient reason to put off the marriage.

"I cannot bear the idea, mamma, of leaving you so ill, and all alone, for so long a time."

"Not more than two or three months, my love ; and as the spring approaches, Doctor

Watson says my strength may increase. But you know I shall not be alone, as the Admiral and Mrs. Bowen come to us the beginning of March, and they will remain with me until your return."

Florence pleaded still all she could for delay, her mother resisting her arguments, until she was seized with a violent fit of coughing. Florence flew to her assistance; her handkerchief was spotted with blood. She had burst a small blood-vessel in the throat. Florence was terrified at the sight; she upbraided herself for exciting her mother to speak so much; her death might be the consequence. She felt she would be the cause of it. Distraction was in the thought. She knelt by her mother as she lay exhausted on the sofa.

"I will comply with your wishes, dearest mother," she said, "pray do not agitate yourself about what I have said; you shall fix any time you please, only do not now attempt to speak more."

Mrs. Seaton revived, and Florence resolved from that hour never again to oppose her in

anything. She saw clearly she was bent on her marrying Mr. Chaffman, and that without unnecessary delay ; that she would never rest satisfied until the ceremony was performed. She felt like a criminal condemned to death, whose period of existence is fast drawing to a close.

The contemplation of her now certain fate seemed worse than the fate itself. She thought of the preparations to be made for her marriage with a feeling almost of horror, as the hammering on his scaffold strikes to the heart of the condemned criminal in his lonely cell. She wished it was over ; and that night, when lying awake on her uneasy bed, she resolved in desperation to fix the earliest day possible for her marriage. It would please her mother. All days were now alike to her ; she longed with feverish impatience for the morning ; she longed to tell her mother what she would do.

The morning at last dawned—but she had fallen into a doglike sleep. She dreamt she had met Macgregor in the glen. The current of her thoughts became instantly changed by

that dream. She would not speak to her mother now. She felt a strong impulse to take a walk for the last time to that once favoured spot which for months past she dared not visit.

## CHAPTER V.

AFTER visiting her mother, who always took her breakfast in her own room, Florence set out alone for her walk. As she approached the rustic seat, the figure of a young girl reclining there met her view. Florence looked again—she did not move. She approached nearer, the girl seemed fast asleep, her head resting on her arm.

“One of the village children,” thought Florence, “tired, perhaps, picking up sticks.”

She went nearer to the seat. The girl suddenly awoke, and sprang to her feet. Florence was struck with her singular beauty, though her complexion was of an olive hue.

"Do you come from the village?" asked Florence.

"No, my lady," replied the girl, with a low curtsey, "I'm a stranger here."

"Where do your parents live then, my pretty girl?"

"They live there," said the girl, mournfully, pointing to the blue sky above their heads—"brothers and sisters I have none."

"Poor child!" murmured Florence; "how then do you support yourself, an orphan and alone?"

"I tell stories and sing songs; I have visited other lands than this, far away over the wide seas. Shall I tell you a story, fair lady?" asked the girl.

"Yes," said Florence, "pray do."

"I was once in Paris," she began, "my father lived there then, he was a spy to the police. He frequented the haunts of thieves and robbers as one of themselves. One evening an English gentleman arrived at an hotel in the Rue Rivoli. He had an Italian valet, a bad, wicked man, who knew Paris well. His master had a large sum of money,

which he carried about in his pocket-book, and which was placed under his pillow at night. The valet betrayed his master's secret to two notorious robbers, who resolved to murder him in his bed. The valet was to receive half the booty.

“ My father discovered the plot. The night, the hour was fixed, for the English gentleman's assassination. The valet was to let the murderers into his master's bed-room, but, coward like, he would do nothing more. The Préfet of police knew all. He called on the Englishman the evening of his intended murder, who was sitting drinking his wine after dinner. The Préfet made known his business in a low tone. He was invited to take a chair. He revealed the plot laid to take his life.

“ ‘ Well,’ said the Englishman, ‘ what next?’

“ The Préfet was surprised at his nonchalance, but saw at once his cool, determined courage.

“ ‘ You have nerve, Monsieur,’ said the

Préfet, ‘you might do us a service—we are bound to protect your life.’

“‘What do you wish me to do?’ asked the Englishman.

“‘This,’ replied the Préfet—he rose quietly from his chair, noiselessly approached the door, opened it, and looked out. He returned with the same stealthy step, and sat down. The Englishman’s right hand was in his coat pocket—the click of a pistol lock was distinctly heard. The Préfet smiled—he rose again, and placed his hands behind his back.

“‘Monsieur can search me if he pleases—I am unarmed.’

“‘No,’ said the Englishman, ‘sit down and take some wine.’

“The Préfet bowed, and filling his glass, resumed his seat and his subject, still in a subdued voice.

“‘The men who are engaged in this plot, Monsieur, are well known to us as having committed fearful crimes; but we have not yet been able to bring any charge clear home to them. You can afford us the opportunity

of doing so if your courage is equal to the trial.

“ ‘ Proceed,’ said the Englishman.

“ ‘ You must show no suspicion, by look or word, of what you have heard from me—do everything as usual, go to bed as usual, and place your purse behind your pillow as usual —do not look under the bed or behind the bed. Tell your valet to call you as usual the next morning ; exhibit no distrust of him, and do not lock your door. At midnight, when all have retired to rest in the hotel, two men will enter your chamber, one with a dark lantern, which will open on your face, in the other hand he will hold a dagger to stab you to the heart. Let not this alarm you, pretend to sleep on, but be careful not to open your eyes. The dagger will be raised to take your life, but my hand shall arrest its fall.’

“ ‘ Hum,’ said the Englishman, ‘ a very cool proposal, Monsieur le Préfet ; suppose you miss your grasp, I am a dead man.’

“ ‘ My life for yours, Monseigneur—I will not fail you ; I shall be behind your bed the whole time from your retiring to rest.’

“‘ Well,’ said the Englishman, ‘ why not seize these men when they first enter my room?’

“‘ It would not answer our purpose,’ the Préfet replied, ‘ we want to catch them in the act of murder; and but for our discovery of this plot, your eyes had never beheld another sun-rise.’

“‘ Well, perhaps not,’ muttered the Englishman, ‘ so I will do as you require. Take another glass of wine.’

“‘ Thank you, Monsieur, I will take one more, and then wish you good night.’

“ The Englishman went to bed, and followed implicitly the Préfet’s directions. At two o’clock in the morning he heard footsteps in his chamber. The curtain on one side of the bed was noiselessly withdrawn—the bull’s-eye of the lantern thrown on his face—he could see from beneath his eyelid, not quite closed, the dagger raised to pierce his breast. (Florence shuddered)—Yet he moved not. The blade was descending—still he made no motion to avert his fate. At that moment a hand was laid on the murderer’s wrist, ar-

resting its downward progress. The Préfet had him in his powerful grasp. The dagger fell harmless on the bed, from which the Englishman sprang up, with a sudden bound. His chamber was instantly lit up, and he beheld his intended murderers in the hands of four police.

“‘ Bravo ! Monsieur,’ cried the delighted Préfet, ‘none but an Englishman could have done this—*c'est magnifique !*’”

“What a horrible story,” remarked Florence.

“It is true,” said the girl. “Would you have thus trusted your life, lady, to the care of this Préfet of police ?”

“No,” replied Florence, “my courage must have failed in such a trial.”

“Your courage has failed you, fair lady, in a trial less than this.”

Florence started, and said—

“How know you this ?”

“I know more, fair lady, than I dare tell you now. Will you hear another story,” asked the girl, “about a young lady that

was going to be married to an old man she did not love?"

"Yes," replied Florence, "if you will not be tired."

"There was a rich old gentleman, who lived in a great house, with servants, carriages, and horses, in magnificent style. He had very large estates in land, besides a great deal of money; but he had only one child, a beautiful daughter, like yourself, fair lady, then in her eighteenth year, whom he loved as she deserved to be loved, for her kind heart and affectionate disposition. Her father was a kind man, too, but he was very fond of money, and had resolved that his daughter should never have any but a rich husband; and the person he had fixed upon in his mind for a son-in-law was an elderly gentleman, a widower, who resided in a fine house like his own, about five miles distant, and whose property joined his. Now, the widower was no favourite with the young lady, although he was neither very old, nor very plain, but a cheerful, pleasant companion, and could tell a good many amusing stories. There were several

handsome young men who visited at her father's house, with their families, but she did not like any one of them well enough to marry him, at which her father was pleased, because they were rather poor.

"In the village adjoining lived an old clergyman, with an only son, who was a fine, handsome youth, with a frank, open countenance, and greatly beloved by all the poor people in the parish; but the rich old gentleman did not like the poor clergyman, because he preached very often about rich men being too fond of money, and not giving enough in charity, according to their means. His parishioners were very poor, and the rich man sent very little to assist them.

"It was a soft, balmy day in May when the rich man was riding through this village, with his beautiful daughter by his side, on a spirited horse, which she sat with the grace of a queen, when, in crossing over an old wooden bridge, beneath which rolled a wide, deep, rapid river, one of the old rotten boards broke under her horse's feet, and stumbling forward, his fair mistress was thrown head-

long into the deep current below, and carried away quickly down the stream. Her father screamed and cried for assistance. Men, women, and children rushed down to the bridge.

“‘A thousand guineas,’ cried the rich man, ‘to anyone who will save my child! Save her!’ he cried, in agony, as two men stood by his side.

“‘Will you give our wives a thousand guineas if we are drowned in trying to save your daughter?’ asked one.

“‘No!—yes!—no!’ he cried, halting between love of his money and his child.

“‘Then save her yourself, you miserly old wretch!’ said the man; ‘our wives and children are as dear to us as your daughter, and depend upon our lives for support.’

“‘Two thousand guineas,’ cried the father, in desperation, ‘to any man who saves her life!’

“‘Come, Jem,’ said the other man to his companion, ‘that’s worth trying for—come along;’ and jumping over a stile into the

field, through which the river ran, they hastened along the bank.

“ At the end of this field, where the stream turned suddenly to the left, stood a high hedge, behind which the clergyman’s son was angling for trout, who, on hearing the cries at the bridge, threw down his rod and line to render assistance ; and he had scarcely done so, when the still floating form of the young lady met his view, borne rapidly down the torrent. Without a moment’s hesitation he sprang into the river, and being an expert swimmer, he soon succeeded in dragging her to the bank. He was still supporting her apparently lifeless body in his arms, when her father, hearing the shouts of the two men, galloped across the field ; but when he saw by whose hands his child was saved, a dark cloud overspread his face.

“ ‘ She moves ! ’ cried the young man, in delight, ‘ her pulse still beats ! Quick, my friends ! ’ he said, addressing the two poor men, ‘ open the gate—I will carry her home ; ’ and he raised her in his arms.

“ ‘ She is my daughter ! ’ cried the rich man, ‘ give her to me ! ’

“ ‘ You can’t carry her ! ’ said Jem. ‘ You couldn’t carry a child. Let Mr. Harold carry her.’

“ ‘ No,’ said her father, ‘ you can do it better than he. Quick—to the inn ! ’

“ Young Harold, without saying a word, placed her in the arms of the labourer, and turned away his dark eye, flashing fire.

“ ‘ I shall send you the reward I promised these men,’ said the father, ‘ for saving my daughter’s life.’

“ ‘ Save yourself that trouble, sir,’ replied young Harold, ‘ I will receive none ;’ and taking up his rod, he walked away.

“ The young lady was carried to the village inn, and being placed in a warm bed, with the doctor and landlady attending upon her, was so far recovered in the evening, as to be removed in the carriage to her father’s house. The next morning a letter was received by young Harold, through the rich man’s groom, containing a draft for a thousand pounds, which he immediately returned.

“The young lady had not known Harold before, although sometimes seeing him at church. She wished to know him now, and thank him for saving her life. The landlady of the inn had told her who her preserver was, and spoke in such high praise of him, that her father could not bear his name to be mentioned. He was a poor clergyman’s son, and had nothing. He had refused the money he had sent him ;—that was an insult to the proud father. The obligation was cancelled. His daughter did not think so. She was vexed at her father’s conduct, and resolved to thank him herself. But how to effect this she did not know. A fortnight had passed since her recovery, when walking one evening to visit a poor man’s cottage, about half a mile from her house, at a sudden angle of the pathway young Harold met her, walking in the opposite direction. For a moment, both stood in mutual embarrassment, when Harold raised his hat, exposing his handsome, yet flushed features fully to her view, and would have passed on.

“‘Oh ! Mr. Harold,’ she said, blushing

deeply, ‘I have so longed to thank you for saving my life, and to tell you how grateful I shall ever feel for your brave conduct in plunging to my rescue.’

“‘I am sufficiently rewarded,’ said young Harold, ‘in having saved one so young and beautiful from an untimely fate. I wish neither thanks nor money for doing my duty;’ and he was passing on.

“‘Pray do not think,’ she said, ‘too harshly of my father’s conduct. I would not have offered you such a reward, but he thought, I suppose, money would be more acceptable than thanks. Believe me, Mr. Harold, such are not my ideas. All that I possess would be a poor recompense for such a service, which to me is beyond all value. But for you, I had now been in my grave. May we become friends?’ she said, timidly; ‘I cannot any longer regard you as a stranger.’

“‘Oh! yes,’ he said, offering his hand, ‘how proud I shall feel to call you friend!’

“They met often again during the sweet summer evenings in a shaded grove, among

the boughs of which the turtle-doves were billing and cooing—whispering their soft notes of love. Is it to be wondered that these two warm-hearted beings should think of love too? One day Harold told her they must meet no more.

“‘ Why must we not meet again?’ she asked, in a trembling voice.

“‘ Because your father dislikes me, and you are becoming dearer to me every day—far dearer now than my own life. Need I say more, dearest?—oh how bitter to me this moment, when I must bid you farewell! Oh! think of me sometimes!’ he added, ‘as I must ever think of you through life—my first, my last, my only love!’

“‘ Oh! Harold,’ she whispered, ‘it is too late—I cannot part with you now. You saved my life;—it is yours. I cannot love another.’

“ He caught her to his heart, and their mutual love was sealed with a kiss.

“ The rich man’s keeper was lying in ambush near for poachers, and told his master what he had seen pass between his daughter

and young Harold. Her father was furious, upbraiding her for her low taste in loving a pauper.

“‘ He saved my life,’ she said, ‘he is so kind, so gentle, so far beyond any I have ever known ; indeed, dear papa, you could not help liking him yourself, if you only knew his worth.’

“‘ Pshaw ! child, don’t talk such nonsense ! I desire you will never meet him again.’

“ She burst into tears, and left the room. For days and weeks the young lady sat and pined alone. The colour faded from her cheeks ; her appetite failed ; she became very ill. The doctor was sent for. He told her father hers was a disease he could not cure. He had a choice left—to follow her to her wedding or her grave.

“‘ Come, my child,’ said her father, ‘I will consent to your marrying Harold, if he can find five thousand pounds within a year, as your wedding dower. You cannot upbraid me now with cruelty. On this condition I will give my consent, but on no other. If he loves you, as you believe, he will find so small

a sum as this. But it must be his own money, not borrowed ; and you shall hold no further intercourse with him in the mean time, by letter or otherwise, or my promise is cancelled.'

"The young lady pleaded that one year was too short a time for her lover to find so large a sum. Her father, after many arguments, was overcome by his child's tears. Another year was granted, but on another condition,—that she should marry his rich neighbour, if within the two years, to that very day, Harold did not produce, and pay to her father, the five thousand pounds.

"The rich man was very particular in money matters. He made his daughter sign an agreement to this effect, and she asked him to give her one in return. This was reasonable. He could not refuse. The young lady was allowed one last meeting with her lover, to tell him these terms.

"Young Harold was overjoyed at the prospect of obtaining her hand. He would traverse the world to obtain the money. Young hearts are ever sanguine. They parted,

vowing constant fidelity to each other. The rich man thought he had made a good bargain. How could this young man gain five thousand pounds in two short years? And before half that time had passed, his daughter would forget all about Harold. He would take her to London, to Paris, and other places.

"Now it so happened that at this time a friend of Harold's father, a merchant, who had trading ships to the East Indies, stopped at the Vicarage for a night, in his journey to a large city near, where he was going on business. The merchant was telling his father that he was thinking of sending out an exploring expedition to South America, in search of gold, which he believed would be found in large quantities in a certain locality ; but he had no trustworthy person to whom he could confide the management of the enterprise ; for if gold was found, as he expected, the ship's crew might agree to keep the discovery to themselves.

"Young Harold caught directly at this opening. *He* would undertake the voyage,

and give the merchant a faithful account. He had studied mineralogy. If gold was really there, he could blindfold the sailors as to its quality. He agreed to do this on condition that the merchant paid him five thousand pounds if the enterprise succeeded. The bargain was made that night, and in a month Harold set sail in one of the merchant's ships, taking with him two stout, trusty young men from his own village.

“ Months passed away. Harold was heard of no more. The merchant gave his ship up as lost. The old clergyman mourned for his only son as dead. The young lady, after travelling about with her father for a year, returned home, reinstated in health. She heard of her lover's supposed death. She saw his father in deep mourning. It was enough. A smile never lit up her beautiful face again. Her father pitied her distress, and condoled with her. He spoke kind words, and did all in his power to divert her thoughts.

“ She felt grateful for his kindness; she loved her father more than ever. Before six

more months passed away, the rich widower had renewed his visits to her father's house. He was also very kind—sympathizing in her distress. She began to like his company ; he spoke in such soft, soothing words. Her father was pleased.

"Thus things went on, until within six weeks of the close of the two years. Her father hinted at the agreement she had made. The rich widower had proposed for her hand ; she could raise no objection ; she must abide by her bargain.

"The widower was accepted, and it was agreed they were to be married the day after the two years should expire. Grand preparations were made for the wedding. The rich widower sent beautiful presents of jewels. The young lady still looked pale and care-worn ; she scarcely ever smiled ; but her father insisted she would be quite happy when married. She knew the contrary, but could not persuade him to think so. She cared for no one else now ; she would make her father happy, if not herself.

"The day on which the marriage had been

fixed to take place proved to be a Sunday. The widower pleaded hard for the Saturday. It was reluctantly conceded by the young lady. ‘One day would make no difference,’ urged her father. The wedding-day arrived. Many neighbours were invited to witness the ceremony. The bride looked like a drooping lily among her blushing bridesmaids. The ceremony began. The clergyman was asking the widower the question if he would take the young lady for his wife, when a loud voice was heard at the church door—

“‘No! he shall not!’ And young Harold rushed wildly up the aisle to the altar. On seeing him the young lady fainted in his arms.

“‘I claim your promise, and my bride,’ said the young man, respectfully, to her father; ‘the two years do not expire until twelve o’clock to night. There are ten thousand pounds (handing him a pocket-book full of notes) instead of five. They are yours; your daughter is mine.’

“The father said he had come too late; the ceremony was begun; it must go on. Great

confusion ensued, the widower declaring he would not resign his bride now nearly half his wife.

“The young lady lay still insensible in her lover’s arms. The clock struck twelve.

“‘It is too late now,’ said the clergyman, ‘the hour is past ; I cannot proceed.’

“The young lady was saved, and became the happy wife of the daring Harold.”

At the conclusion of the girl’s story Florence sat in deep thought for some seconds.

“Do you like my tale ?” asked the girl.

“Yes,” said Florence, “it is very interesting ; I should like to hear more another day.”

“I will come here again, if possible, fair lady, but cannot promise when—perhaps to-morrow—perhaps a month, or six months hence.”

“You will not find me here, then, I fear,” said Florence, with a deep sigh and crimson blush.

“Where will you be, then ?” asked the girl ; “you are a sweet young lady, I could love you very much ; I begin to love you

already. Oh ! tell me where you will be. I would walk miles to see you again."

"I cannot tell you where I may be," said Florence, "perhaps hundreds of miles away."

"Are you going to be married, then, dear lady ?" asked the girl.

Florence could not answer.

"To a rich old man you do not love?—your true lover supposed to be lost or drowned?"

Florence could no longer suppress her tears. The girl threw herself at her feet, crying too.

"Dear, sweet lady, do not weep. Young Harold returned to save his bride; why should not your lover also yet live?"

"Oh ! no, no, my poor child; it is a hope I dare no longer indulge. I must now wish you good-bye."

"Stay," said the girl, rising, "is your marriage day fixed?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied Florence, sadly—"the twenty-fifth of next month."

"Our Lady's day," muttered the girl—"a good omen; you may be happy yet; ere that day comes you shall see me again. Farewell,

sweet lady ; bear in mind my last story ; all may yet be well ;” when, bounding lightly to the verge of the wood, with her right hand extended towards the ocean, she sang, in a sweet, plaintive voice, a parody on the old Jacobite song :—

“ Over the sea, over the sea,  
*Faithful Fitzwarine whispers to thee ;*  
Over the sea, over the sea,  
*Dearest, I'm coming, oh ! tarry for me.”*

and then disappeared suddenly from her view.

## CHAPTER VI.

FLORENCE on her walk back to the house was deeply agitated by her strange adventure with this interesting and mysterious girl, and by her last story, which struck her as so closely resembling her own sad fate, but more than all by her song ; and for a few moments a ray of hope broke in like a gleam of sunshine on her darkly-clouded prospects. It was possible Hugh might still live. But what would he think of her broken vows, should he return ? Would he marry one whose hand was already promised to another man ? He would despise her for her fickleness and want of faith. Distraction was in the thought—

her mind was almost crazed. How was her conduct to be explained, and by whom?

She had not seen Mrs. Fitzwarine for many weeks,—she might reproach her also. Her resolution was taken to see her that very evening, and tell her all that had passed between her mother and herself; there was comfort in the idea of pouring out all her sorrows into that faithful breast. That same evening, after her mother's early dinner at two o'clock, Florence set out for the Abbey, and was received by Mrs. Fitzwarine with her usual kindness, although she thought with less cordiality than before.

With bitter tears poor Florence told Mrs. Fitzwarine all the secret feelings of her heart, and her mother's importunities for her to marry Chaffman—every word that passed between them on this subject—what the Doctor had told her, and her mother's last seizure from being excited at her resisting her wishes.

“In short,” said Florence, “poor mamma, believing herself to be in a hopeless state, has so set her mind about this marriage, that I

fear her death will follow if I do not comply with her wishes. Oh! dearest Mrs. Fitzwarine," cried Florence, still weeping bitterly, "what can I do? my heart is nearly broken—but is it not my duty to obey my mother's wishes under such circumstances, even at the risk of all my earthly happiness? Oh! in mercy advise me how to act, you are my only friend—my second mother," and Florence threw herself into her arms, sobbing convulsively. "Oh! should your son ever return, what would he think of me? A thousand times rather would I work for my daily bread than marry this man."

"My poor, dear child," said Mrs. Fitzwarine, "I pity but cannot blame you for making this fearful sacrifice—yet what can you do in this dreadful strait?"

"You must advise me what to do," continued Florence; "without your consent and approval, even now I dare not prove false to the vow I once made your son."

"Alas! my dearest Florence, that vow is cancelled, I fear, too surely now—we may go

to him, *he* will not return to us—” and the tears of both burst out afresh.

Mrs. Fitzwarine was the first to recover some degree of composure, when she said—

“ We must not give way to this unavailing grief, my dear child—we must think now of our duty to the living. I cannot advise you to resist your mother’s will, her death might be the result, you would then never again enjoy one happy hour; you may be contented if not happy with Mr. Chaffman. They say he is kind-hearted, and much respected by those who know him—I do not; but if he is to become your husband, I must become acquainted with him for your sake, for I shall always consider you my daughter, and all I possess will become yours at my death. This I have already settled, and that if you married, one of your children should take our name and place. You must now introduce me to your intended husband, my dear Florence, and I will try to like him for your sake.”

“ Then you think, dearest Mrs. Fitzwarine,” asked Florence in surprise, not unmixed with dismay, “ I ought to marry him ?”

"I cannot recommend you to do otherwise," was the reply, "as your mother has set her mind so strongly upon it; she may, perhaps, reason rightly, you may become happier with other ties and duties. You must come and see me oftener now, dearest Florence, since your mother is better—will you come?"

"Ah! yes, my dearest, kindest friend, every hour I can spare shall be devoted to you before that fearful day," and she shuddered at the thought.

"There is some little comfort to be derived, my dear Florence, from almost every bitter draught. Had your mother wished you to marry a stranger, I might never have seen you again; you will now be near me, and a comfort in my declining age, the short time I may yet be spared on earth."

Florence returned home that evening more resigned to her unhappy lot than she had felt before. If Mrs. Fitzwarine could advise her to marry Chaffman, what more could she urge against her mother's wishes? It seemed as if everything combined to link her destiny with his; but her mind was relieved of a

heavy load of care, by this interview with Mrs. Fitzwarine, who, should her son ever be restored, now knew the secret feelings of her heart.

The next day Mrs. Seaton again asked her daughter what answer she should give Mr. Chaffman.

“ You may name any day you please, dearest mamma, only let it be the latest you can fix, if it must be next month.”

“ It will be best then, my dearest child, I feel convinced. Mr. Chaffman so particularly desires it, and I really must say he has been so very kind and considerate—so exceedingly delicate in all these matters, and so very liberal in his proposed settlement, that it would be ungracious to refuse this moderate request. Shall I name, then, the twenty-third of next month, my love?”

“ If you think proper, dear mamma,” and, taking up her bonnet, Florence left the room.

From this time Mrs. Seaton seldom reverted to the subject of her marriage in her daughter’s presence, and Florence devoted as much

time as she could spare to Mrs. Fitzwarine, driving to the Abbey generally two or three times a week ; so that between the hours devoted to her mother, and those to Mrs. Fitzwarine, Mr. Croly Chaffman had few opportunities of love-making ; in short, Florence took care never to be left alone with him. Mr. Chaffman fretted and fumed secretly at this cool treatment, like an impatient horse restrained by a sharp bit ; and one day, when alone with Mrs. Seaton, he could not forbear showing a little temper at her daughter so continually avoiding him, which drew down a severe lecture on the head of poor Florence from her mother, on her return from the Abbey.

“ You are always now,” said Mrs. Seaton, “ at that Abbey, and I conclude Mrs. Fitzwarine does all she can to set you against Mr. Chaffman, as you are never here to receive him as you ought to do when he calls.”

“ Indeed, mamma, you do Mrs. Fitzwarine great injustice by such a remark ; she has, on the contrary, advised me to comply with your wishes, and told me she would be glad to see

Mr. Chaffman if he would call upon her. But surely I may devote some of the little time of my remaining liberty to my dearest and kindest friend, who has acted so generously too towards me."

Mrs. Seaton observing her daughter's ill-concealed annoyance at her intended reproof, and having been told before of Mrs. Fitzwarine's intention to leave the Abbey estate to Florence, wisely restrained herself from saying more.

## CHAPTER VII.

IN the drawing-room of Forest Lodge, on a bright bracing morning in March, are assembled a small party, consisting of Admiral and Mrs. Bowen, Mr. Chaffman, and a very demure, pale-faced little man, dressed in black, Mrs. Seaton and her daughter, the former now nearly recovered from her long and severe illness, and reclining in an easy chair near the fire. A large ominous-looking parchment lies open on the table, on which the eyes of all are fixed, as if waiting for it to speak and explain the object of its being there. It was the marriage settlement, to be signed two days before the wedding. A dead

and ominous silence pervades the room, which no one seems inclined to break. A tear glistens in the eye of the old Admiral, who turned his back to the company, and was looking out on the lawn, his attention apparently wholly engrossed by some external object.

The soft, mellifluous voice of Chaffman almost whispers to Mrs. Seaton—

“We are only waiting now, my dear madam, Miss Seaton’s signature.”

Florence, who sat pale and motionless near the table, more like a marble statue than a living woman, started from a deep reverie as the words reached her ear, and for a moment her features were suffused with the deepest crimson, which quickly gave place to the most death-like pallor.

“My dearest Florence,” asked her mother, in a faltering, quivering tone of voice, “will you sign the paper before you?”

She rose quickly, as if by natural impulse, to obey her mother, when the little man in black stepped obsequiously forward to her side, and dipping a pen in the ink, directed

her where to write her name. She seized the pen with sudden desperation, but her hand shook so violently that she could scarcely retain it, and the ink fell, causing a large blot on the spot where her signature ought to have stood. That dark blot seemed to strike her as ominous of her future fate—it stood in the gap before her—it occupied the little space beside that great red seal which her name was intended to fill—as she still looked on it in dismay, it assumed the shape of a horrid black spider (of which she had an instinctive dread), and with its long straggling legs, it seemed crawling towards her. She sprang back from it in terror with a faint scream, and reeled into her chair.

“Pray allow me to assist you again,” interposed the obsequious little man, sopping up the ink with a piece of blotting paper.

Florence, however, did not rise—the pen fell from her hand, and sinking back, she burst into a flood of tears.

Mrs. Seaton rose, and was instantly at her side, whispering—

“Pray, my dearest Florence, do not give

way thus before strangers—control yourself."

"Oh! mamma," she said, sobbing, as her heart seemed almost breaking, "I cannot—dare not sign that paper—ask me to do anything else and I will obey; but I must not lie to God—I will not—cannot take a false oath."

At this moment, when the eyes of all were riveted on the scene between mother and daughter, another form had been added unperceived to the group. The voice of Macgregor fell like a thunder-clap on all assembled.

"Thou hast well resolved, Florence Seaton, to fear God rather than man."

At these words, she sprang like a wild thing from her mother, and rushed towards Macgregor. His arms were extended to receive her, and as she fell insensible into them, he whispered—

"Hugh Fitzwarine lives!"

For a few moments consternation was depicted on every face;—each stood or sat as they had been before—speechless—motionless.

Mrs. Seaton, indignant at this intrusion of a stranger, first broke the silence by addressing Macgregor.

“Who are you, sir, that have presumed to break in upon our family party, and interfere in our private affairs?”

“One, madam, who has a full right to do so,” replied Macgregor firmly — “Resume your seat, and listen to my words—and you, my poor child,” as he placed Florence in a chair, now recovered from her swoon, “you shall now know why *none dare dispute my will*. You are a noble example (a rare one in women,” he added with a sneer) “of constancy and filial obedience, as far as you dare obey your parent, and by God’s permission your fidelity shall be rewarded by the hand of him whom you have loved so steadfastly. Hugh Fitzwarine, come forward and receive your affianced wife.”

The door opened, and Florence, turning her head, fell with a cry of joy almost senseless into his arms.

“Hurrah! hurrah!” shouted the Admiral, dancing round the room—“My boy still lives!

thank God ! Off with the parchments, lawyer—we will have a joyous wedding yet !”

Chaffman’s clerk, at a hint from his master, was about to seize stealthily the parchment, when the hand of Macgregor was laid upon it, who said—

“ That deed, sir, I shall require to peruse.”

“ By whose authority are you acting in this extraordinary manner, sir ?” demanded Chaffman, advancing to take hold of the deed.

“ By my own ! thou false villain,” shouted Macgregor, “ stand back.”

“ I will not stay here to be insulted, “ cried Chaffman ; “ that deed is my property, sir—I insist on its being restored to me.”

“ *Qui hi*,” called Macgregor in a loud voice, and in an instant the stalwart form of the gipsy and two other men entered the room.

“ Hold that paper firmly,” said the recluse, addressing the gipsy, “ and let none leave this room.”

The two other men stepped back to the door, and Chaffman saw, at one survey of their stern faces and robust frames, that resistance was hopeless.

"I appeal to you," he said, "Admiral Bowen, as a witness that this deed has been torn from my clerk's hands, and I demand its immediate restoration."

"Hold thy false tongue, thou miscreant," replied Macgregor, "until thou answer me one question. By her father's will, thou knowest Florence Seaton cannot marry under age, without her uncle's consent. Is it not so?"

"We have no proof of Mr. Seaton being still alive," remarked the lawyer.

"That proof shall not be long wanting," added Macgregor. "Stand forth, Donald Macrae—who am I?"

"My late master's only brother, Mr. Arthur Seaton," replied the old man, with the exclamation—"The Lord be praised for his mercies in restoring you again to your native land."

"Mary Dallas," he said, turning to Mrs. Seaton, "you do not recognise, in the old white-haired man before you, the youth you once professed to love, and by whose fickle-

ness I became a wanderer and woman-hater, on this wide world?"

Mrs. Seaton raised her eyes to his face with a long enquiring look, and then, falling back in her chair, exclaimed—

"You are indeed my long-lost brother!"

"It is enough," said Macgregor. "Come here, Florence, once more to your uncle's heart;" and after folding her in a warm embrace, he continued, as he still held her hand, "Thou hast all thy mother's beauty, and more than thy mother's constancy, or thou hadst never become my adopted daughter, as well as niece. This hand, as thy guardian, I bestowed on my adopted son, Hugh Fitzwarine. Dost thou repent the vow then made in my presence? If so, retract it now."

"Oh! no—no—indeed I do not," replied Florence eagerly.

"Take her then, with my second blessing, Hugh, and leave the room—I have this business to finish, which you need not stay to witness. Read that document, thou imp of the devil," vociferated Macgregor to Chaffman's clerk; "and will you, Admiral Bowen,

see that he reads correctly all therein written?"

The Admiral put on his spectacles to do as directed, and the gipsy, still holding the paper in his hands, the clerk without hesitation obeyed.

The document was worded in the usual style and *intelligible* phraseology of such legal instruments—a repetition of which it is needless to inflict on my readers. The clerk proceeded without interruption, until he reached that part where Chaffman professed to settle Ashton Hall, with the lands, &c., &c., thereto belonging, on Florence Seaton for life, in case of his decease, and to her children after—

"Stay," cried Macgregor, turning to the lawyer—"thou knowest that Ashton Hall, of which thou hast now unlawful possession, is strictly entailed on Mr. Hayward, who lives, and is also married, having several children."

"I know no such thing," doggedly replied Chaffman.

"Then you know it now," exclaimed a

voice close to his ear. "I am William Hayward, and have come down to make strict enquiries into your villainous dealing with my father's property."

Chaffman stood speechless for a moment, without uttering a word, and then made a rush at the door.

"Keep him back," cried Macgregor; "he goes not yet, until his whole villainous conduct has been exposed."

"Detain me at your peril," said Chaffman, addressing the man who opposed his exit from the room.

"We shall obey our orders," was the sullen answer.

"Lay a finger on me," said one, "if you dare, Lawyer Chaffman; you would have ruined my father and all his family if you could—stand back."

"Very well, sir," said the discomfited lawyer, addressing Macgregor, "you shall pay for keeping me a prisoner against my will."

"You shall be a prisoner in Heddington jail, before to-morrow night," replied Macgregor, "if you utter another threat to me."

Now listen, madam," he continued, turning to Mrs. Seaton, "and hear this villain's schemes against yourself and daughter. He knew from my agent in London that I was still unmarried, when he assured you that I was living in India with a large family of children. He knew that my landed property in Yorkshire would revert to your daughter Florence, if I died without issue. He knew, also, that under the same will, to which I alone am executor and trustee, your daughter was entitled to twenty-five thousand pounds on her marrying with my consent (which, when married, he calculated on obtaining, through your intervention, as your son-in-law), or on coming of age, and this would enable him a little longer to conceal his infamous transactions from the world. He persuaded you to place your five thousand pounds in the Heddington bank—that money he received and kept himself, taking it back from the elder Franklyn, after it was entered on his books, to cover his own loss, and answer the double purpose of making your daughter also appear dowerless, so that she might fall

an easier prey into his hands. In every family to which this villain had access—at the barrack mess, in nearly every house in Heddington, has he represented your daughter as almost penniless, in the hope of at last gaining her for himself. The quarterly payments you have received came from my hand on your daughter's account, yet for this also has he obtained the credit; and last of all, he had cajoled you into sacrificing your broken-hearted, too dutiful child to his base nefarious purposes, by his false show of ill-gotten wealth. Away, thou villain!" cried Macgregor, with rising vehemence and indignation, "or I'll tear thee limb from limb."

Pale with fright, the lawyer rushed from the room, through the now-opened door, his clerk following close on his heels, and leaving the deed in the gipsy's hand.

"Cut that accursed parchment into a thousand pieces," exclaimed Macgregor, "and burn it in the kitchen grate; and do you, my old faithful Donald, take these my other friends with you to the housekeeper's room."

During these proceedings, Mrs. Seaton sat a silent listener to Macgregor's vehement declamations against that man who had so nearly plunged her only child into hopeless misery. She felt now her unfeeling, reckless conduct, in forcing her too obedient daughter on such a fate ; and as Macgregor (whom we must now call by his right name, Seaton) proceeded in exposing the villain whom she had so lately coveted for her son-in-law, she became spell-bound with horror and amazement at his diabolical acts and machinations to plunge them both into irremediable ruin and disgrace.

The excitement over, Seaton now approached her with an altered mien, and in a low voice said—

“ Forgive me, my dear Mary, if I have spoken too harshly or rudely—by a sun-stroke, when in India, my brain has been affected—I am almost crazed sometimes with excitement, and I could not restrain my indignation in that scoundrel’s presence, who had so nearly robbed us both of that dear, affectionate child.”

"Indeed, I do forgive you, Arthur," she said, rising to take his hand, when she was caught quickly in his embrace. "You have been too kind and generous to me and my poor child," she sobbed.

"No, no, Mary, say not so—you are my sister, and she has been my adopted daughter long ago. There is one other you will receive for my sake, your brother's heir."

"Yes, indeed," she said, "I will with joy, for to Hugh Fitzwarine I had promised my dear child's hand ; but indeed, indeed, Arthur, we both mourned him as dead."

"Lean then on my arm," he said, and conducting her to the library, Hugh came forward to meet her, with the hand of Florence still in his.

"She is your own, my dear boy," exclaimed Mr. Seaton, seeing his enquiring look, as Hugh knelt before her, his heart too full to speak. Mrs. Seaton impressed a kiss on the forehead of the handsome, though sunburnt youth before her, and placing her daughter's hand in his, said—"May you both be as

happy, my dear children, as you deserve to be for your constant affection. And now, Arthur," turning to Mr. Seaton, "you will, I know, excuse me for retiring to my own room for an hour or two, in my still weak state of health."

Florence would insist on conducting her mother upstairs, where she remained with her until she became more composed.

The old Admiral, no longer able to suppress his feelings of delight at Hugh's return, now burst into the library, and caught Hugh in his arms, exclaiming—

"My boy, my dear boy, come to the old sailor's heart."

"Why, Admiral," said Mr. Seaton, "you appear to lay claim to this lad as well as myself, but I cannot comprehend how, loving him as you appear to do, you could stand tamely by and see his affianced wife given away to that rascally land-shark."

"Ay, ay, sir, it was a villainous piece of business, but you don't know all the tacks and soundings I made to avoid that rock on

which we were all so nearly wrecked. I never could bear to see sharks at sea hovering round the ship, they always foreboded evil—but I hate a land-shark ten times worse. This rascal I suspected from the first, he was too plausible—too much of a humbug to suit my notions of what a man should be. But when I arrived at Forest Lodge, only a fortnight ago, the thing was already settled, and Mrs. Bowen, seeing how strongly Mrs. Seaton had set her mind on the marriage, entreated me to keep my opinions to myself.

“ ‘ It can do no good now, John,’ she said, ‘ trying to interfere ; you will do more mischief in setting Florence against the man of her mother’s choice ; you will make her, poor thing, still more miserable than she is at present. No, John, it will not do, we have arrived a month too late, and our duty now is to try and reconcile poor Florence to her fate. Chaffman, although a lawyer, is a fine, good-looking man ; he is well received by the neighbouring families, he is well known, and has great influence in the county, and it is reported

that he will be member for Heddington at the next election. He has a nice place, is immensely rich, and has made a most handsome settlement on Miss Seaton. What is there, John, you can say against his character or position ?'

"' He is a confounded land-shark, my dear,' I said, ' and I can't bear the fellow.'

"' If Mrs. Fitzwarine can bear him, and advise Florence to marry him, what have you more to say ?'

"' Nothing, my dear,' I was constrained to say, for the storm was beginning to rise, and thus you see, Mr. Seaton, the old Admiral was obliged at last to strike his colours to the petticoats."

At this moment Florence entered the room with her bonnet on.

"There, Hugh," he said, cheerfully, "take her out for a walk, we don't want to see you again until the dinner-hour."

It would be idle attempting to describe the transport of delight with which these two happy beings set out to re-visit, once more

united, the scene of their last sad parting in the glen. When they reached the rustic seat, there sat the story-telling girl, her interesting features now lit up with the most joyous expression, who, on their approach, rose, and with a low curtsey, said—

“ Ah ! dear lady, you see I have kept my promise of bringing you good news before your wedding day. Hugh Fitzwarine, like Harold, has returned to claim his lawful bride.”

“ How do you know me ?” asked Hugh, in surprise.

“ Ah !” she replied, “ that is a secret, like Macgregor’s—I dare not tell—you must not ask me questions ; would you like to hear another story, sweet lady ?” she said, with an arch smile.

“ Not yet, my pretty girl, but I must now reward you for your amusing tales, which I could not do when we last parted.”

“ I will receive nothing of you but this,” as she took her hand and raised it to her lips. “ We may meet often now—but Hugh

Fitzwarine will tell you so many pretty stories about the beautiful black ladies he has seen in Caffirland," and with a hearty, childish laugh, she bounded like a fawn into the wood.

"This seems enchanted ground," said Hugh; "what strange adventures have we met with here, my own dear, long-loved girl!"

"Strange, indeed, dear Hugh, but the most strange of all is our meeting once more here, on this hallowed spot, where I have so often sat and mourned you as lost to me for ever. How mysterious, yet how merciful, the dispensation of the Almighty, who has preserved us both from that wretched fate from which there appeared no hope of escape; but believe me, my own dear Hugh, a thousand times rather would I have been laid in my grave at once than undergo that lingering death which I consented to meet in obedience to what I believed my mother's last earthly wish. You may judge by my altered appearance the agonising struggle I have had to endure."

"Oh! say not another word, my own

dearest Florence. My mother has told me all, as Mr. Seaton and myself reached the Abbey late last night—but by his mysterious orders, I was not permitted to see or let you know of my return until this morning.”

## CHAPTER IX.

It may be supposed by young, impatient persons that the very first thing to be done after Hugh's return was to fix his wedding day with Florence Seaton, to whom he ought, as a matter of course, to have been almost immediately united; but such was not the case. If Hugh had not much improved in health or appearance by his rough sojourn among the Caffirs, Florence had suffered much more by mental harassment. In fact she looked only the shadow of her former self. The colour had entirely deserted her once rounded, rose-tinted cheeks. The sparkling brilliancy of her dark, lustrous eyes was gone

and her once faultless *tournure* of form and limb had become attenuated and angular to an alarming degree.

This great change in her daughter had apparently escaped Mrs. Seaton's observation until now, when she seemed suddenly struck by her debilitated state. One excuse may be made for this obvious inattention to her daughter—her own bad state of health, which prevented her noticing so much that of Florence.

Her nervous anxiety for her marriage with Chaffman, independent of its securing her a capital settlement, arose from the conviction that her thoughts would then be immediately diverted from so continually dwelling on her lost lover, and by a total change of scene and change of life—Chaffman having engaged to take her on the continent—she would soon recover her former good looks, and her mind its usual elasticity, when occupied with new ideas inseparable from her altered condition ; and the all-engrossing attentions of a husband so devotedly attached to her, as he professed to be, would allow her little time to indulge

unavailing grief for one whom it would then be her duty to obliterate, if possible, from her memory.

Mrs. Seaton calculated on her daughter's firm principles to maintain inviolate her marriage vow, when once made, and that she would from that hour strive to love, honour, and obey her husband, to the suppression, if not extermination, of all thoughts of another; and she hoped, moreover, by the time of her daughter's return to Forest Lodge, there might be a prospect of another powerful link to cement the bond of union between them, which seldom fails to knit a young wife more closely to her husband.

For the wealth of India I would not induce a child of mine to take as a husband one she did not truly love and respect above all others. Even to a man, the cold, passive endurance of an unloving wife strikes as a chilling blast. What, then, must be the feelings of an artless, modest girl, of delicate ideas, when consigned to a husband for whom she has no regard!

Among other cases similar to that of Flo-

rence Seaton, I remember one of heartless cruelty on the part of a father, whose only daughter, a fair, tender-hearted girl, was compelled by him to marry a man contrary to her own inclinations, and in such a state of mental and bodily weakness as to be supported by his arm to the altar, and within a twelvemonth she was carried, broken-hearted, to her grave.

To Hugh Fitzwarine and Mr. Seaton the alteration in poor Florence became instantly and painfully obvious, particularly to Mr. Seaton, who had seen her last; and although now most anxious to claim her as his bride, Hugh would not, from a true feeling of delicacy, and sincere, unselfish affection, make known his secret wishes until the bloom had returned to her cheeks.

To the Admiral's question—(who was all impatience to see the indissoluble knot tied)—“Well, Hugh, when has Florence fixed the day?” he replied, “I shall not, my dear Admiral, ask her to fix that just yet, as my dear mother cannot spare me to go on another journey—our wedding-trip—immediately on

my return home, after so long and painful an absence. And you, my dear girl," he said, turning to Florence, " will, I know, fully enter into my feelings."

"Indeed I do, dear Hugh; and my own happiness is so complete, that our marriage could not increase it."

"Ah, my pet!" exclaimed the Admiral, laughingly, "you cannot persuade me that girls don't long to be married to the man of their own choosing; but I tell you frankly, that from Forest Lodge I don't clear out until I have seen yourself and my boy here made man and wife."

"Then, my dear Admiral," replied Florence, in her former playful manner, "we will put it off as long as possible, for the sake of enjoying so much more of your most charming society."

"Ay, ay, my pet! that won't be so very charming, I suspect, now you have got the young Abbot back again. Still, my dear, to speak the truth, a little delay, to recruit your health and spirits, will not be amiss—while you are a Miss;—excuse the wretched pun,

my love—and I can remain until grouse shooting is over without the least inconvenience. Ah, my dear boy, your long absence and supposed death have given me the heart-ache for many dreary months ; and when I saw my pet lamb being offered up to that fiend in human shape, I thought it would have burst ; yet, villain as he has turned out, we all thought him an upright, honest, good-tempered man, and likely to make her an excellent husband."

A cold shudder passed through Florence at these last words, which Hugh observing, said,—

" My dear Admiral, pray never again allude to this subject ; for had I found Florence that villain's wife, the dupe of his trickery, his death had been the certain consequence by my hand."

The small dinner-party (which Mrs. Fitzwarine joined) that evening at Forest Lodge was the only happy one to poor Florence since she had parted with Hugh Fitzwarine in the glen, now eighteen months since ; but of all, old Donald seemed the happiest, whose

eyes were alternately fixed on Mr. Seaton and Hugh with a beaming expression of delight, cheering to behold.

Mrs. Seaton alone sat almost silent, her mind occupied with harassing reflections on her conduct to her too dutiful and affectionate child.

“Come, Mary,” said Mr. Seaton, “we must have a glass of wine together, for the sake of ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ the song I used to sing when a boy. Let all the bygones be forgotten to-day, which ought to be a jubilee for the wanderer’s return. This day the Hermit Macgregor has dispelled the mystery by which he has been so long enveloped, and stands forth once more, for the sake of these two children of his adoption, in his true name of Seaton. It is right you should now know the reason why I adopted this concealment. On succeeding to the property left me by my distant relative and godfather, I resigned my appointment in India, and returned to my native land. My first enquiry was about my poor brother’s widow and child. How I obtained the information of your living here, it

is not necessary for me to tell; or how I heard of that dear child's beauty of person, and still greater beauty of mind. I resolved to judge of this report by my own observation, and if she equalled my expectations—that my brother's only child should inherit all my other property—besides that to which she would become entitled under my godfather's will—the old eccentric Mr. Murray, whom you must well remember. Had I come down here as the rich uncle, judging her by other women, she would have had every inducement to render herself most agreeable and amiable in my sight, and her true character would have remained unknown to me. I therefore purchased that tract of land, and erected that bungalow on the moor as a residence, where I could live quite retired, my true name and designs being revealed to your old, faithful Donald only, on whose fidelity I could rely. Unseen by you or Florence, I have often wandered about this place, and hovered near her when walking in the glen. Of her beauty I had many opportunities of judging; and of her kind heart and devotion

to her mother I heard not only from Donald, but others.

"I knew also Hugh Fitzwarine, although he knew not me. I liked his character, so widely different to men of his age. I heard of his saving Florence from the moat. I saw him walking side by side with her in the glen—I heard words which convinced me of his love. Hugh rescued me from those murderous villains who would have taken my life—from that day I resolved Florence should become his wife, if he proved worthy of her. His fidelity I proposed to test by sending him to India—that trial I knew would be a severe one, which nothing but the most disinterested devoted affection could induce him to undertake. He was to leave his mother, on whom he doted—all his amusements and occupations—go as a stranger to a strange land—risk all the perils of that long sea-voyage—for Florence Seaton. His obedience to my commands was fully tried by his faithful observance of my secrets, and in reward for his manly honest conduct I joined his hand with that of your daughter, and pronounced them

man and wife ; and by my command he forbore to tell you of his love for her, when Sir Everard Hilston was apparently an accepted suitor.

“ You may suppose my horror on hearing of his shipwreck, and neither by night nor by day could I rest, until I undertook myself a voyage to the Cape in search of him whom I loved as my own son. Still, I had left an agent here, who, in case of your daughter’s hand being promised to another, possessed my authority to prevent that marriage taking place, by forbidding it at the altar, since by my brother’s will she could not marry under age without my consent—and more I may tell you now—she had been prevented by force, if necessary, ever becoming the wife of another, without her free consent, as long as there remained a chance of finding her affianced husband still alive.”

“ Then I conclude,” interposed the Admiral, “ the two gentlemen who officiated as door-keepers this morning to prevent the lawyer’s exit, would have been concerned in a runaway

match with my pet here, if the clergyman persisted in going on with the ceremony?"

"Even so, Admiral, and a dozen more hands were ready to execute my orders—I never do things by halves—Florence had been conveyed to a place of safety until my return, a letter being left with my chief agent in this business, to explain to her the cause of my unceremonious proceedings."

"You met with a little story-teller in the glen, my child," he said, turning to Florence.

"Yes, dear uncle—she was very pretty, and clever too, in telling her tales—we met her there again this morning."

"She would have been your travelling companion, my child, to beguile your journey; being older than she appears to be, and possessing the sense and discretion of a man, with all his courage. She is an orphan of half Indian blood, whom I brought with me from her native land—henceforth she shall become your lady's maid, if you so desire it, my dear child, and I will answer for her fidelity—in short, she has already taken such

a fancy to you, that I fear she will desert my Bungalow."

"I should be delighted to have her, dear uncle, if you really wish me to do so, and mamma does not object. She would not add too much to our expenses, dearest mamma?" appealing to her mother.

"No, my love, you can take her if you wish."

"I trust, my dear child," added Mr. Seaton, "you will be able to bear prosperity as well as you have hitherto borne adversity! You are no longer a portionless girl robbed of your little patrimony by that audacious scoundrel; but, independent of your own fortune, which I shall now hand over to you at once, you are in part your uncle's heiress, and should that boy sitting by your side," he added, laughing, "treat you with disregard or want of attention, you will have no lack of suitors."

"Oh, how can I prove my gratitude to you, my dearest uncle, for all your kindness and generosity?"

"By recovering your lost beauty and

spirits, my child, as quickly as possible ; I shall then be sufficiently rewarded ; and as a further inducement for you to use every means to regain your strength, I shall not, as your guardian, permit you to marry till quite re-instated in your former health and good looks."

" There, my pet," added the Admiral, " we will set sail now with this freshening breeze, and let loose all our canvass before the wind. Rides, drives, and walks, barring only the old Abbey walls—dances and songs in regular succession. We will have a song to-night as a beginning."

" Then you must tune the piano first, Admiral," replied Florence cheerfully, " for it has not been opened for many months."

" Never mind, my dear, if we can't have music, we will have a row of some sort, for I am just in the humour for dancing and singing ; and I have already set half the bells in the country ringing ; but by the way, my boy," turning to Hugh, " I am all impatience to hear your wonderful adventures, and therefore propose, when we join the ladies in the

drawing-room, that you devote this evening to a recital of your sojourn among the Caffirs."

"On that proposal, Admiral, I am obliged at present to put my *veto*," said Mr. Seaton, "until that dear girl has recovered from the fearful excitement she has undergone to-day."

"You are quite right, sir," replied the Admiral; "my curiosity has exceeded my prudence—after this tempest we should be glad to lie at anchor a little, to repair the mischief done to my pretty craft."

"Moreover," added Hugh, "I must return home early this evening, as my dear mother is also in a very nervous state."

## CHAPTER X.

THE day following, the news spread like wildfire through the town of Heddington that Mr. Chaffman had absconded. People rushed to and fro in the streets in as great consternation as when the bank had failed. His place of business was besieged by clients. There sat the clerks, as usual, scribbling away, who merely said, in reply to the numerous questions, that “Mr. Chaffman had been obliged to go to Liverpool on a matter of the greatest importance, which might detain him a few days.”

One, however, Mr. Lacker, the jeweller, who had lately advanced Chaffman a sum of

four thousand pounds, being very dissatisfied with his clerk's evasive answers, rode with all speed the next morning to Forest Lodge, where his worst fears were quickly realized by old Donald, who told him briefly the exposure of his villainy the previous day by Mr. Seaton, and maddened by the now certain loss of his money, the jeweller returned to Heddington, telling all his other clients in the town what had occurred.

The fact was that Chaffman, having previously made all arrangements for leaving home on his wedding trip, finding his villainous transactions so unexpectedly exposed by Mr. Seaton, rode home directly to Ashton Hall, where, after telling his sister that he was obliged to set out without a moment's delay for Liverpool on most important business, his carriage was ordered out, to be driven with all speed to the nearest post-town on that road, by which *ruse* he expected to conceal the real course of his flight. For the next stage he continued the same route, on reaching which, not being there known, he turned aside, travelling day and night until

he had crossed the channel for Paris, which it was his chief object now to gain before news of his failure could reach that city, where he had to receive a large sum from an English gentleman residing there, who had purchased a landed estate from one of his clients, and which, under present circumstances, he proposed converting to his own use.

To explain Chaffman's sudden downfall, it is necessary to take a short review of his previous position, which had been a false one since his first occupation of Ashton Hall, now some ten years ago. In short, Mr. Chaffman wished to appear a much greater and richer man than he really was. Had his town house at Heddington sufficed him, he might have done well. His father left him, when twenty-five years of age, a good business and a good round sum of money ; but he had imbibed at an early age a partiality for field sports and other amusements. Independent farmers, with whom his father had transactions, invited Master Croly to have a shot at the partridges and hares on their lands. Master Croly proved a good marksman ; and so by

degrees he went on, until at last he was permitted to take out a game certificate, and have his holidays in September, for which he worked hard at the desk during the other months of the year.

Croly would talk of sporting to country gentlemen when they called to see his father ; and being a comely, good-looking youth, he was asked occasionally to their houses for a day's shooting. This gave him a taste for better society than that of his father's friends. Croly longed to be a country gentleman too ; and after his father's death, with this view, he took possession of Ashton Hall, which had been untenanted for two years, the management of the property being left in his hands.

The world admits of no medium in money matters. A man is considered, according to public report, either very rich or very poor. Croly's father was reported to be worth half a million at least. His son appeared to confirm the report, by taking up his residence at Ashton Hall, which he furnished in the most costly style. His establishment also was con-

ducted on an expensive scale, with servants, carriages, and horses. He kept a butler, with two footmen, housekeeper, first and second cook, coachman, head groom, helpers, gardeners, and keepers. He married a pretty, delicate-looking girl, the daughter of old Squire Oldacre, who had a large family, but small means ; he stood, however, high in the county, being a magistrate and deputy lieutenant ; and Croly, therefore, took his daughter to wife, as a passport into the other neighbouring families, by whose means he calculated on additional “grist to his mill” at Heddington. Within the twelvemonth his wife died, with her first child ; but Croly’s object had been obtained—he had gained a footing in the county.

Notwithstanding his *p penchant* for field sports and good living, Croly did not neglect the shop, but stuck to his work ; he had, moreover, a very clever head clerk in the conveyancing line, quite as sharp as his employer ; and another of like talents, in the common law department ; so that Croly could indulge safely in a little recreation during the shooting

season, although generally to be found in his office from ten to one o'clock every morning.

Croly was also Lord Lessingham's agent to receive his rents, having other appointments of the same kind, which descended to him from his father; so that, upon the whole, he drove a thriving trade, and from the high character he had acquired for honesty and integrity, obtained implicit confidence with rich and poor. Farmers and tradesmen trusted their savings and surplus money in Chaffman's hands, who paid them higher interest than they could get elsewhere.

Thus things went on for some few years; but the Ashton Hall establishment played a hard game against the quill-driving establishment; in fact, it was a case of house divided against house. His father's hoard of money-bags had been very rapidly diminishing. The new furniture, pictures, plate, &c. &c. purchased for Ashton Hall, made, at first onset, a large hole in his heap of corn, which proved not half so large a heap as people

fancied—containing little more than fifty thousand guineas.

Croly Chaffman, however, did not yet know what it was to be short of cash ; he had always plenty of other men's money, into which he could dip when necessary. They were satisfied to receive regularly their five per cent. Croly at last began to see that the pace he had been going was too fast to hold much longer, and he had been some time on the look-out for a safe investment in the matrimonial line.

Being Mrs. Seaton's legal adviser, he had access to her papers, and had lately discovered, through Mr. Seaton's agent in London, all concerning his property. This caused Chaffman to cast a wolf's eye upon poor Florence ; but, seeing her so greatly admired on her first introduction to the world, his chance of success in that quarter appeared very small. About the same time, also, he discovered the tottering state of the Heddington bank, where he had still some six thousand pounds of loose cash standing to his credit, not his own. The loss of this sum would be of

serious consequence ; it was all the spare money he possessed. He advised Mrs. Seaton accordingly, and, as we have before mentioned, appropriated her five thousand pounds to cover his own loss.

By this manœuvre he thought also to succeed in a nearer approach to her daughter, and his villainous scheme, as we have seen, was nearly crowned with success.

On the winding-up of the bank affairs certain revelations peeped out, not much to Mr. Chaffman's credit. People suspected it was not all right with him. His friend, the jeweller, was the first to smell a rat, but he was a cautious, crafty man like Chaffman, keeping his own counsel, lest others might take fright, and demand their money also. The jeweller had now been put off for some months.

Chaffman said he had lent his money on mortgage, and it could not be called in under a certain time ; but he was going to be married directly to Miss Seaton, and should receive with her twenty-five thousand pounds down.

The jeweller should be paid out of that, if he wanted his money so soon.

“That is all very fine,” said Mr. Lacker, “but I am not satisfied. You have told me of your engagement to that young lady for the last four months; I must have proof, or I shall place the matter in Mr. Driver’s hands” (his rival solicitor).

“Well, Mr. Lacker,” replied Chaffman, “you shall have ocular proof—here is the will, under which Miss Seaton is entitled to twenty-five thousand pounds on her marriage; and here is the draft of the settlement, which Mrs. Seaton has approved. The day is fixed for our marriage, the twenty-third of this month. You can go to Miss Williams, the milliner, who has received orders to make Miss Seaton’s wedding-dress — what other proof can you require? And besides all this, you will see by that will that Miss Seaton succeeds to a large landed property in Yorkshire, upon her uncle’s decease, who is an old feeble man, without children.”

Mr. Lacker worked hard away at the will, and, with a hitch every now and then at terms

he did not comprehend, but which Chaffman explained, at last appeared pretty well satisfied. He was also shown letters from Mrs. Seaton, containing instructions as to the marriage settlement.

"This appears all straight enough," said the jeweller, in better humour, "but there are two things I should like to know very much ; one, how you succeeded in obtaining this young lady's consent to marry you, when it is known she has rejected so many rich suitors, with rank also ; and the other is, when, on what day positively I am to receive my money—for have that I must and will the day before your marriage, or I will go over that same evening to Forest Lodge, and expose what I know and have heard of your affairs to Mrs. Seaton and her daughter."

Chaffman felt disposed to knock down the jeweller for his insolence, but curbing his passion by a strong effort, said—

"The first question he was not disposed to answer ; but that in reply to the second, Mr. Lacker might depend on receiving his

money any hour after twelve on the twenty-second of March.

Chaffman, from this interview with the jeweller, saw at one glance that the game would soon be roused up, and he obliged to contend with a pack of hungry clients let loose on his heels ; but he must find the money somehow to stop Lacker's mouth, or he should be an entirely ruined man,—Miss Seaton's money being his last resource, with which he might yet live comfortably on the continent ; for it now became manifestly impossible for him to return to Heddington again.

Chaffman had foreseen the storm gathering round him, and that made him so urgent for his marriage to take place without further delay. He was now obliged to set his wits to work, to prepare the four thousand pounds for the jeweller ; and by hook and by crook, obtaining some from his sister, and some from Lord Lessingham's principal tenants, under the pretence that, having to pay the election expenses of his son by a certain day, they must advance the rent a short time before it be-

came due, Croly had scraped together about five thousand pounds, including two of his own, or rather Mrs. Seaton's money, the day before he was detected and exposed at Forest Lodge.

Miss Chaffman had laid by about fifteen hundred pounds out of her own income, in return for the loan of which, Croly made over to her all the plate and valuables at Ashton Hall, in case of accidents during his trip on the continent; but as to the true state of his affairs she was kept quite in the dark. Chaffman never trusted any man with a secret, much less would he trust a woman, although his own sister.

Mr. Driver, the opposition quill-driver, had been instructed by the younger Howard, on whom the property was entailed, to demand a full account of the rents received, and the disbursements on the Ashton Hall estate. He insisted also on arrears of rent for the house, which had now been occupied by Chaffman for nearly ten years. Croly pleaded his inability to obtain a tenant—

the house had been vacant two years before he took up his abode there. He occupied it to keep the house free from damp,—he had done many repairs—he could not be called upon for rent.

Mr. Driver thought otherwise, and to war he went with Chaffman, tooth and nail. Mr. Howard was coming down the twenty-fifth of March, to see into all these matters; and the tenants of the Ashton Hall estate had received notices a few days before, through Mr. Driver, not to pay Chaffman any more rents. The storm must soon burst on his head—the clouds became darker every hour; but luckily for him Mrs. Seaton had not heard as yet of any of these things, and he laughed in his sleeve when he thought he should be safe away on his wedding tour before the twenty-fifth of March, the day Mr. Howard was expected.

Chaffman felt no compunction in robbing Mrs. Seaton of her daughter, as he had previously done of her money. Poor deluded soul! how surprised she would be on hearing

the news of his failure, and the discovery of the trick he had played her about the settlement of Ashton Hall on her daughter.

“ Ah,” he muttered to himself, “ that was the bait the old woman snapped at so quickly —two thousand a-year and Ashton Hall ! Outwit a lawyer indeed ! poor soul ! I’ve got the oyster, plump and full, money, diamonds, and pearls—and she has got the shell—hah ! hah ! hah !”

It might cause the old lady’s death—she would never survive the shock—so much the better for him—her daughter would have Forest Lodge. He would pay Miss Florence off for her insolent behaviour to him after she had become his wife—she might die of a broken heart too, if she liked ; her money would be his. He never intended she should return to England again, even if her mother survived the disgrace he had brought upon her family—he had her daughter safe—she must go with him wherever he went ; he would keep a strict watch over her, so that she could not escape. He knew the deep

affection between mother and daughter, the very idea of final separation would destroy them both.

Such were the plans of this heartless, murderous scoundrel; and these plans had been most probably carried out, but for that overruling Providence which controls unseen, and laughs to scorn the dark machinations of the wicked!

On Mr. Lacker the jeweller's return to Heddington, he ran to and fro about the streets like a madman, raising a hue-and-cry after Chaffman. His office was again besieged by all classes who had placed money in his hands. The clerks were still persisting in their story, when Lacker, rushing in, exclaimed :—

“ It's all false, gentlemen, what these clerks are telling you ! I have been over to Forest Lodge ;—Chaffman has run away ! He was exposed yesterday by Mr. Seaton, the young lady's uncle, who came down just in time to prevent the rogue marrying his niece. Mr. Howard, the proprietor of Ashton Hall, has come down also to claim his property.

He is now in Mr. Driver's office ;—come and ask him if I have not told you the truth !”

A rush was made to Mr. Driver's office accordingly. Mr. Howard, being informed of their object, came to the door, and related all that had occurred at Forest Lodge, and concluded by saying that a greater villain never existed than Croly Chaffman.

“ He has ruined us !” cried several voices ; “ we left our hard earnings in his hands !”

“ He has nearly ruined my father too !” replied Mr. Howard, “ and I can feel for your distress.”

“ Let us go to Ashton Hall !” cried a tall, stout man—“ I'll have my money out of his goods !”

“ Ashton Hall is now in my possession,” said Mr. Howard, “ and all it contains I claim for arrears of rent !”

With a deep groan, the clamorous clients began to disperse, seeing it was hopeless, after so many hours had elapsed, to overtake Chaffman in his flight.

The following being market day in Hed-

dington, which the farmers generally attended, a meeting of Chaffman's creditors was convened at Mr. Driver's office, when resolutions were passed to make him a bankrupt—sell a small farm he possessed near Ashton Hall, his house and offices in Heddington, with his horses, carriages, and all available chattels, and divide the proceeds among them.

On comparing notes of hand, given by Chaffman to his dupes for value received, people were astonished at the large sum of money these represented. Tens from some poor men; twenties from others; fifties and hundreds from small tradesmen and farmers; and thousands from those in better circumstances. Some produced false mortgage-deeds on lands and houses, the owners of which only existed on paper.

But the general security was Chaffman's note of hand only. People wondered how he could have spent all their money; it was a mystery no one could solve. But, independent of his extravagant expenditure at Ashton Hall, by living there in the most

fashionable style, and giving his dinner-parties, with the most expensive wines, &c., Chaffman had made one or two very unlucky speculations in lead and coal mines, which proved failures. He had also been what is termed a sporting man (the reverse of a true sportsman), and, as many north countrymen are, a betting man also on the turf, by which he had been let into a secret on the St. Leger race of the last year—the confidential communication having opened Chaffman's eyes and purse to an alarming extent.

These little ex-official transactions had been kept *sub rosa* by the crafty lawyer; but some of his friends now recollect meeting him at Doncaster during the past meeting there, when it was reported he had won a large sum on the principal event, instead of which, Croly had narrowly escaped being exposed as a defaulter.

Thus Chaffman, having too many irons in the fire, burnt his fingers most ruefully by trying to handle them all at once. The

bubble had burst, and the great lawyer vanished in such a cloud of smoke and dust as had never before been witnessed in the nearly ruined town of Heddington.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE Admiral, whose custom it was to ride into Heddington on market day, to spin a yarn with the farmers, to whom, from his frequent sojournings at Forest Lodge, he had now become well known, returned home, to use his own expression, “with a ship-load of news about the land-shark !”

“ Ah, my dear madam !” he exclaimed, addressing Mrs. Seaton, “ my pet has had a narrow escape from that soft-tongued, plausible scoundrel. He had not a shilling of his own money left ; he has robbed and cheated the poor people of their little savings deposited in his hands ; and it is quite clear now

that he never intended to return to this country again. He would have carried off that dear girl, spent all her money, and had she not died of a broken heart, he would most likely have turned her adrift on foreign soil, to find her way home how she could.

"Pray, my dear Admiral," said Mrs. Seaton, "do not, in mercy, speak of that man again, or you will drive me distracted! The very thought of what my poor child must have suffered, through my blind folly, is almost enough to break my heart; and I am surprised and astonished now at my weakness and credulity, when both yourself and others have so often warned me against trusting him so implicitly."

"All's well that ends well, my dear madam,—and we know you acted for the best; so let the villain go—we will say no more about him. But, by Jove! it is a lucky thing for him he has cut his cable, and gone off to sea, or our young Caffir would have blown his brains out! And he told me last night never to mention the fellow's name

again, on pain of giving him serious offence. Hugh always was a peppery lad, and I like him all the better for his high spirit. Egad ! there's no humbug about him !”

“ What are you saying about me, Admiral ? ” asked Hugh, who just then entered the room with Florence.

“ No treason, my boy,” was the reply, “ of that I think you are tolerably sure ; I merely said you were a lad of spirit, and rather peppery sometimes, which I think even my pet there will admit.”

Florence blushed slightly at this allusion to his quick disposition, but said instantly—

“ Hugh has had many things to try his temper, dear Admiral, but, thank Heaven, these trials are now past.”

The fact was that Hugh that morning had been in rather a pettish humour with Florence about Chaffman, and had told her she had yielded too readily to her mother's wishes in consenting to marry a half-bred mongrel of an attorney ; any one else he should not have regarded so much, but that she would be

degraded in the opinion of the world by accepting such a low fellow as Chaffman.

“I am degraded then in yours?” she said, bursting into tears.

“Oh, no, no, my own dearest girl,” replied Hugh, folding her in his arms. “I know your deep affection for your mother—others may not—and I can see by your altered looks how severe has been the struggle between your duty to her and to yourself. But, by the Admiral’s account, the rascal had not much cause to think you were in love with him,” he said, laughing.

“Indeed he had not, dear Hugh,” she replied, more cheerfully, smiling through her tears; “he never even presumed to raise my hand to his lips, or I had never spoken to him again—so you need not be jealous, Hugh.”

“I ought not indeed to feel so,” he added, “but you know, my own precious girl, I am confoundedly jealous sometimes.”

“Then I will tell you also that I had a presentiment I never should marry that man; and when the pen was placed in my hand to sign that deed, I determined even then never

to write my name on the same paper with his. At the last moment, when the time had arrived, I felt it impossible for me to become his wife. My mother could not by tears and entreaties have altered my purpose then. My conscience told me I was doing right. That morning, for the first time, I read over in my prayer book the marriage service attentively, and I was horror-struck when I saw the false vow I should be obliged to take in the presence of the Almighty. Yet I dared not tell my mother my feelings and thoughts until the last moment. Something might intervene—I thought and believed something would ; but when the fatal pen was at last placed in my hand, my resolution became strengthened by an inward monitor, never to write my name on that paper.”

“Enough, my own true-hearted and devoted girl, you have scattered my silly, jealous feelings to the winds ; that man’s name shall not again escape my lips in your presence. I ought, and do feel too grateful for God’s mercy in preserving my life through so many perils, and saving you from a fate so horrible,

to allow any other thoughts but those of thankfulness to take possession of my heart even for a moment. But anger and resentment will sometimes find a place there, when I think of that scoundrel's wicked conduct, and his deep schemes to rob you of everything you possessed, and your life also, for he had determined it seems never to revisit England, although deluding your mother with the idea of bringing you home within a few months."

"Is it possible he could have been so barbarous?"

"Yes, dear girl, it is quite clear now that such were his intentions ; he could not have returned if he would. All his swindling transactions are now exposed, and if caught, transportation will be his doom. And now, dear Florence, to cut this subject short, to which I shall never again willingly revert, have you any jewellery or presents made to you by that man?"

"None, dear Hugh, I assure you—I would receive nothing at his hands. He brought one day a case of beautiful diamond ornaments,

displaying them on the table to my view, which, scarcely noticing, I declined to accept, saying I had more than sufficient jewellery of my own, for I felt that by taking them I must compromise my own feelings. Mamma was present, and urged me not to refuse his kindly intended present; but even at the risk of offending her, I firmly persisted in my refusal, and to show my resolution on this point, I left the room."

" You did quite right, my dear Florence—but now, what has become of your intended wedding dress?"

" It was ordered by mamma, and when brought home, at my request taken to her room. The very sight of it made me shudder, and I would not permit the milliner even to try it on."

" That dress, dear girl, you shall never wear as my bride."

" But what shall I do with it, dear Hugh? It was purchased with her money, and is a very expensive one."

" Were it studded with diamonds and pearls," Hugh said, vehemently, " I would

burn and stamp it to ashes under my feet, rather than you should ever put it on. Your mother can give it to Caroline Middleton, who I conclude will be one of your bridesmaids, when you have made up your mind, my love, to become my wife—but not a particle of it shall *you* ever wear.”

“ My dear Hugh,” said Florence, playfully, “ you have become very peremptory, and I fear your disposition is not much improved by your travels ; I am almost afraid of you now—what will it be when I am bound to obey you ? Really, Hugh, I begin to think I shall have but a sorry time when your wife.”

“ Well, Florence, you can cancel our engagement if you please ; you are now an heiress, and have the world before you to choose a better-tempered husband than Hugh Fitzwarine. My brain has, I fear, been affected by the burning heat of an African sun. I am now easily excited ; my face has been also bronzed almost like a Caffir’s ; I am no longer the same light-hearted, blooming youth by whose good looks your girlish fancy was first attracted—I know it—see it—feel it—

but in one respect I am not changed—my devoted love to you. Still sadly altered in appearance, as every one must admit I am, and you yourself have noticed in temper also, you are no longer bound by our engagement, made under different circumstances. Good temper is essential to happiness in the married state. I have it not now, and might make you unhappy."

"Oh, Hugh," exclaimed Florence, "how can you speak in this unkind strain to one who has loved, and does love you still, far more than her own existence; had you been restored to me ten times more changed—had you been visited by every affliction—deprived of eyesight, lame, bereft even of reason—still had I watched over and loved you as dearly as ever, for have you not incurred the risk of losing all, and your life also, for my sake? Dear, dear Hugh," continued Florence, "do not think so unkindly of your own Florence—indeed, indeed, I only spoke in jest of your temper, which I know has been sorely tried."

"Forgive me, dearest girl," said Hugh,

throwing himself at her feet, “I will not rise till you pronounce my pardon for speaking as I have, under my excited feelings—never again will I give way to temper.”

“I do not regard that, Hugh,” she said with a smile, “and you may beat me,” she added, laughing, “if you please, when I become your wife; but now you are on your knees, promise me never again to doubt my loyalty and love.”

“That, dearest, I do most willingly; I never have, and never can doubt your true devotion to me.”

“Well, stay a moment longer in that position”—as he was about to rise—“I will now see,” taking off his hat, “if you really are so much changed as you say; tanned you are most decidedly, my dear Hugh, brown as a berry, forehead and face too—yet I like a-brunette complexion, particularly in you—it gives a more manly appearance—you looked too boyish before (don’t take offence), so in that respect you are not changed for the worse in my opinion. That scar on your forehead will ever remind me of what you have suffered,

my own constant Hugh, on account of your poor Florence, for whose sake you left your happy home, and save for God's mercy in preserving you through so many perils by land and sea, had never visited again, and it shall now be my unceasing care to make you, if possible, some recompense for all you have braved and done for me."

"I would have braved ten times more, my own Florence, to be rewarded with your deep, faithful love."

"Well, Hugh, after that pretty speech, I must bid you rise, and as to the wedding-dress, it shall be given to Caroline, as you suggest—it shall never be worn by me; and for the future—I may as well begin to practise my duty beforehand—you have only to make known your wishes, and they shall be immediately complied with."

"A thousand thanks, my love, for this kind condescension, which is far beyond my deserts; I have only one wish now, you may guess what that is."

"Well, dear Hugh," she said, blushing, "with that I will comply whenever you do-

sire; you may fix the time when you would claim me as your wife."

"Enough, my darling girl—but that time I will not name until you are restored to perfect health—in fact, it rests with your uncle now, whose wishes we are both bound to consult, and as perhaps he may be waiting to see us, we will return home."

Notwithstanding Mrs. Seaton's pressing invitation to take up his residence at Forest Lodge, Mr. Seaton still continued to inhabit his bungalow on the moor, and to this spot he had become so attached, that he resolved to make it his future home, by adding several other rooms, stabling, &c., more on account of his adopted son and heir than on his own.

The complexion of affairs, both at the Abbey and Forest Lodge, had undergone a change greater than that observable in Hugh's face—all was joy and thanksgiving at his unlooked-for return; for although quite overcome at first by her son's sudden restoration to her arms, Mrs. Fitzwarine had now recovered the shock of joy, sometimes as diffi-

cult to bear as that of grief ; and in addition to her general bounty to the poor, they were all invited to a banquet in the old Abbey hall in honour of his return. This was not given to them, as Ramsey explained (who with Hugh presided at the feast), with any ostentatious motives, but as a freewill offering to the Almighty for preserving her son's life from shipwreck, and restoring him to her again.

" Your kind hostess, my friends," said Ramsey, " wishes that you also should share in her joy, and besides the feast now set before you, she has directed me to supply you with provisions sufficient to maintain your families for a week."

The acclamations with which this short address was received may be well imagined, and many were the blessings invoked on the young laird, as he was called by the lower orders, and his kind-hearted mother. Old Donald would not rest satisfied without an ovation at Forest Lodge, and not liking to speak to his mistress on the subject, had recourse to Hugh.

“ We hae had an unco dull time o’ late, Maister Hugh, and your poor neighbours hae ta’en their bit and sup in the auld Abbey walls,—sae I was jest thinking we maun hae a wee bit skipping in the servants’ hall here as weel.”

“ Well, Donald, your proposal is very reasonable, but I fear disturbing Mrs. Seaton, whose nerves have been so sadly shaken lately.”

“ It wud do my leddy good, Maister Hugh, to hear the sound of joy and mirth after all this doleful wark—and Miss Florence too, poor bairn, mourning and vexing ever sin ye left the auld Abbey, and went sae far, far awa fra hame—sure, Maister Hugh, we hae cause to rejoice at your safe return, and only just in time to save my young mistress from a wofu’ bridal.”

“ Which you know, Donald, would never have taken place.”

“ Aweel, Maister Hugh, I ken what I ken ; but ye yersel wouldna dispute the Macgregor’s will, wud ye ?”

“ No, Donald, certainly not ; but I know

now how many things reached his ears. You have been a true and faithful friend to me, my worthy Donald, and I shall consider myself your debtor to the end of my life."

"Never fash yersel about that, Maister Hugh; but if ye'll jest speak a word to my leddy—"

"That I will, most willingly, Donald, and you shall have your wish."

Mrs. Seaton, not being disposed to gainsay any proposition coming from her son-in-law elect, Donald obtained full permission to invite as many of his friends as the hall would contain.

Florence being anxious to hear Hugh's adventures, her uncle proposed he should relate them that same evening when he dined at Forest Lodge, which we will render in the third person instead of the first.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE Juno left Calcutta with a full complement of passengers on board, all with happy faces, in expectation of once more beholding their cherished friends and cheerful homes in old England ; to few, alas ! of whom were these sanguine hopes ever to be realized ; for, after she had passed the island of Madagascar, a leak was sprung, which no efforts of the crew could overcome, and she began quickly to fill with water. Consternation and dismay sat on every face when the inevitable fate of the vessel became known ; the passengers rushing to and fro on deck with frantic appeals to the Captain to save

them from destruction. One alone stood apparently unmoved by the heart-breaking scene around him ; his dark eyes fixed on the clear blue sky above his head, whilst the tremulous motion of his lips betrayed the secret working of his heart in that dark hour of trial. His thoughts were wandering far away to the home-scenes of his early life, and the aspiration escaped his lips,—

“ O God ! grant that we may meet again in thy heavenly kingdom.”

His right hand rested on his gun, as if to steady him against the motion of the ship ; and an occasional glance was directed towards the still far-distant shore, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, startling him from the trance into which he had fallen, and a hoarse voice whispered in his ear—

“ Be quick, and follow me !”

A man in a sailor’s dress passed rapidly from his side, and disappeared over the ship’s stern. Hugh Fitzwarine followed his unknown conductor, who swung himself down by a rope to a boat below, already filled with men, and whom he hesitated not an instant to

follow ; and almost before he knew what had happened, the boat had cleared the sinking vessel, propelled by vigorous arms through the rising surf.

As the piteous cries of the women still rang in their ears, the strokes of the sturdy tars relaxed, their hearts relenting for the hapless beings they had left behind them to their fate.

“ It cannot be helped, comrades ! ” exclaimed the same dark-featured man who had rescued Hugh ; “ and we might, perhaps, as well have been drowned at once as fall into the hands of those d—d Caffirs, which I fear we shall do, should we reach the shore. That gun has saved your life for the present,” he said, turning to Hugh—“ you looked like one who could handle it well ” — (for, requiring both hands in holding the rope, the gun had fallen and been caught by one of the boat’s crew).

This swarthy stranger, who had been a passenger on board, was evidently a man well acquainted with the dangers of the sea, and seeing at once the helpless state of the Juno

(by his nautical knowledge having excited the attention of both the Captain and crew), he had immediately set about securing his own safety; and during the confusion on board, with two or three willing and able hands, to whom his object was communicated in a whisper, the boat was stealthily cut away and lowered by his direction, a few arms and ammunition, with a bag of biscuit, being thrown into it; and on passing Hugh with his double-barrelled gun, the thought struck him that he would be of great service to their party, in killing birds and beasts for their support.

This man (whom we will call Halliday), by general consent, took the command of the boat, and being well acquainted with the coast they were approaching, directed the crew where to pull. The shore was reached without much difficulty by running the boat into a narrow creek, where it was made fast to the bank. Here, in a sequestered spot, Halliday proposed to bivouac for the night, and set out early the next morning on their route towards Cape Town, leaving the boat

where it lay, to return to it in case of necessity, if driven back by the Caffirs, when they might be enabled to put off again to sea.

Having sufficient provisions for that night, Hugh was directed not to spend his ammunition in shooting birds or larger game, plenty of which, Halliday said, they should meet with on their track the next day ; and perhaps the report of the gun might bring some of the natives around them.

Early the next morning the party, numbering thirteen men, set out on their perilous journey, a great part of the country they had to pass through being inhabited by Caffirs, then at open warfare with the English.

Halliday took the lead, with Hugh, ordering the others to follow in single file, that their footmarks might be restricted to one pathway ; and as they passed along, Hugh's double-barrelled gun contributed to their small stock of provisions by bringing down several guinea-fowls and quails, with which the country through which they were passing abounded. To avoid the heat of the mid-day

sun, after having accomplished about fifteen miles, the party halted under some large, wide-spreading trees, by the side of a nearly dried-up mountain-stream, where they made a fire to cook their game, and then lay down to rest.

Overcome by fatigue and heat, all were soon fast asleep, save Hugh and Halliday, whose minds were too much excited to find repose. These two sat on the ground, close to each other, Halliday relating his adventures to beguile the time, when Hugh, hearing the crack of a falling branch from a tree on the bank above them, turned his head quickly round, and there saw a dark face, with flashing eyes, peering down upon him from the fork of the tree.

His first impulse was to seize his gun, lying beside him ; and then laying his hand on Halliday's shoulder, he whispered what he had seen ; but on Hugh's motion to reach his gun, the face had instantly disappeared.

"I see nothing," said Halliday, in the same

low tone ; “ perhaps it was only a monkey, or baboon ? ”

“ It was a human face, if ever I saw one,” replied Hugh.

“ Then lay down your gun within reach, and pretend to sleep, with one eye open ; I will do the same.”

They lay for ten minutes motionless on the ground, Halliday snoring loudly, when he observed the head of a man slowly raised again above the fork of the tree. For a minute or two he gazed steadily on it, then rolling over (as if still in sleep) closer to Hugh, whispered in his ear, “ A Caffir ! ”

“ What’s to be done ? ” asked Hugh, as he was about again to stretch out his hand for his gun.

“ Stay ! You cannot hit that red devil,” said Halliday, “ who is watching our every motion. His head will drop again the moment yours is raised ; and there is not an inch of his body visible. Lie still where you are ; I will try to circumvent him. But don’t fire, unless certain of a good aim at his body.”

Halliday rose cautiously from his position—not to awaken his other comrades,—and stepping lightly down the ravine for a few paces, then turned to the left for the rising ground. Hugh kept his eye still fixed on the tree, but the head of the Caffir was no longer to be seen. In a few minutes, however, he caught a glimpse of a form on the ground beyond, and springing to his feet, he rushed up the hill. On reaching the level land, the Caffir was seen flying at the top of his speed across the plain more than two hundred yards in advance of him. At that moment Halliday reached the same spot where Hugh was standing.

“ Ah !” he said, “ that red devil proved too cunning for us ; he watched me, no doubt, manœuvring amongst the trees to get a sight of his carcass (Halliday carried a rifle), and then stepped down, cutting away for his life. The game’s up, Fitzwarine ; we must be stirring and away,—for there’ll be a body of these hell-hounds on our trail directly.”

Rousing the men, and apprizing them of

their danger, Halliday immediately took the lead, as before, desiring Hugh to bring up the rear, lest any of the men might loiter behind. In this order of march they reached before night-fall a large forest, in which they were obliged to rest, closely huddled round a fire, for the nights were exceedingly cold, as the days were hot. But Hugh having been directed by Halliday on no account to fire his gun at any other game, the men had only a few biscuits left for supper, with which they were constrained to be content. Halliday and Hugh kept watch alternately through the night, not daring to trust another in this time of danger.

The crackling of the sticks had ceased, the embers were quickly dying out, and Hugh, lying on his side, felt too much excited to close his eyes, when, hearing a footstep near, he sprung to his feet, cocking his gun.

“Hist!” said Halliday, approaching him, “there is something moving,” pointing in the direction whence he heard the noise; “it may be a lion or other wild beast prowling about us; but listen, your ears are better than

mine, and your mark more sure ; take my rifle, and let us get behind this tree.”

All was silent around them for some time, and Halliday was just telling Hugh, in a low voice, he might have been deceived in the sound, when the crack of a stick became distinctly audible to both, and Hugh’s quick eye caught the outline of a form gliding through a small opening in the wood.

“ It may be a lion,” he whispered, “ or a wolf ; it is too low for a man.”

“ Fire,” said Halliday, “ when you get a good sight.”

The figure was lost for a few seconds behind a tree ; it then began again stealthily approaching. Halliday saw it too.

“ Fire !” he said, quickly, to Hugh, “ it must be a lion, getting nearer to make his spring sure.”

Instantly the crack of the rifle echoed through the wood ; all sprung upon their legs ; a rustling and scrambling was heard among the dry sticks and leaves on the spot where Hugh had caught a glimpse of the object, and all was again silent as before.

Arms in hand, the party stood ready prepared for any foe that approached. For half an hour they waited in breathless expectation for the sound of other footsteps or noises amongst the brushwood. None were heard.

"Come," said Halliday, "we may as well pick up your game, Fitzwarine, for there it lies still, having scarcely moved after you fired."

They approached the spot, and there lay the dead body of a large, powerfully-made Caffir, enveloped in a bullock's hide. Hugh started back in surprise and horror at the deed he had done, when, Halliday divining his thoughts, said—

"You have saved the lives of many by that shot ; the brute was prowling about, thinking to catch us all napping, and had buried this blade in our hearts," pulling from his girdle a long, sharp weapon. "He has been sent by his party to dodge our footsteps, and take back tidings of our movements ;—come, lads, take him up," said Halliday, "we must carry him aside from our trackway, and then resume our march, for if they find his body, we must

fight for our lives, not one of which will be spared should we fall into their hands."

By the light of the moon the small party again set forward, Halliday directing their course by the stars, now glittering above their heads, and at daybreak (in a wretched plight, their clothes being nearly torn from their backs in scrambling through the bushes) they reached the outskirts of the forest. Here they halted for an hour, breakfasting on their last biscuit.

"Now, my lads," said Halliday, addressing the men, "cheer up your spirits; beyond the plain before us lie the out-settlements, which if we can reach before these Caffirs overtake us we shall be safe—come on."

"I shan't come on," replied one of the sailors, in a sulky tone; "we have tramped enough for one day."

"So say I," cried another—"Jack's as good as his master, and I don't see we be obliged to follow the Captain there, as he calls himself, any longer."

"Please yourself," said Halliday, "I had as

soon have your room as your company—do you go with me, Fitzwarine?"

"Yes, of course I do," replied Hugh, and these two walked on, no other choosing to follow. They had advanced about a mile and a half to rising ground, when, hearing the report of a gun, they looked back, and saw one of the men they had left behind running out on the plain, pursued by two Caffirs.

"Ah!" said Halliday, "just as I thought, those fools will pay for their whistle; the red devils (they were smeared with red clay) are upon them, and a pretty strong party too—see, there's a dozen more leaping out of the wood—quick! we must now run for our lives, and having a good start, we may yet beat them. Here," cried Halliday, "down this hollow, we must make for the beach again, or they will catch sight of us on the plain."

Terror gave wings to their flight, and they had just reached some stunted bushes over-hanging the rocks, behind which they rested for a few moments to take breath, when, on looking back, Halliday discovered, by a small glass he carried in his pocket, about twenty

Caffirs scudding over the plain, in the direction they had intended taking.

“There go those bloodhounds,” he said, “far and wide, but they have overshot our trail, and now they are clustering together again to hold a council of war—Ah! now they are separating, one party taking the left, the other the right hand ; the cunning devils know we are not before them—one will sweep along this bank—we must descend, Fitzwarine, and hide ourselves in some of the rocks below.”

They walked quickly forward some hundred yards, to a place where the bank appeared less precipitous ; it was still a perilous attempt, being almost perpendicular for some few yards, but a ledge of sandstone arrested their too rapid descent. From this they swung themselves down into a large fissure in the rock, covered over on the top by stunted shrubs and bushes.

“This will do,” said Halliday, “they cannot approach us here except one at a time from above, nor climb up from below ; look to your powder, Fitzwarine, and put in ball

instead of shot—here we must make our stand, and pick them off one by one if they discover our retreat.”

They had fresh primed and prepared their guns, and been waiting some time in nervous expectation, when Halliday, who was reconnoitring with his glass from a small loop-hole, laid his hand on Hugh’s arm, whispering—

“ There’s a couple of those devils just above us, jabbering and pointing over the sea, they think we have put off in the boat—Ah ! so it is—they are now going forward to that hollow dingle leading to the beach, to see if they can trace us there. They halt again—what is it ? Hah ! I see more red devils coming on to join them—half-a-dozen more—now they are off again down to the sands, running about like bloodhounds to recover the trail—hah ! they are at fault again, another jabbering consultation. They separate once more, four go up the beach, four come this way—we must keep quiet now.”

From their hiding place, visible only from the sea, Hugh and Halliday could watch every movement of the savages below them, who,

on coming to the ledge of the rocks jutting out into the sea, could advance no further. Here they clustered together, examining some mark on the sand, and pointing sometimes over the sea, and then towards the land, appeared undecided how to act. Returning again, they now began to scramble up among the rocks. It was a time of agonizing suspense to Hugh and Halliday, as they beheld their enemies trying to scale the overhanging rock on which their position was taken. They drew back from the entrance of the cave, and side by side, knelt down, with gun in hand, ready to shoot the first intruder. The Caffirs' voices were distinctly heard, jabbering at their bad success in trying to scale the rock. The dark, shaggy head of one appeared for an instant just above the platform, it again instantly disappeared, and a crash and a cry told the fate of the rash adventurer—he had fallen on the sharp rocks below, and one of his legs was broken. His comrades descended cautiously to his assistance, and the whole party were soon seen carrying the disabled man, and re-tracing their footsteps on the sand.

"A narrow escape for us, Fitzwarine," whispered Halliday, "but we must be cautious still, these brutes think we are hid among the rocks, and will renew their search, either this evening or to-morrow morning. We shall be safe during the heat of the day, so let us lie down to rest, for we must start again at night-fall to resume our course, else we shall be starved to death—I am hungry enough already. Have you any biscuit left?"

"Not a crumb," replied Hugh, "I have a few lozenges only in my pocket, to the half of which you are welcome; but I saw those Caffirs picking up something to eat on the beach—oysters, perhaps, or shell-fish."

"No matter," said Halliday, "we must be content."

At nightfall they scrambled up again to the plain above their heads, and after cautiously looking around, walked forward with lighter hearts, and far lighter bodies, believing all danger from the Caffirs had now passed. They traversed several miles of this ocean-like plain before the moon rose, and on descending into a valley, here and there studded with a

few stunted bushes, Hugh caught sight of a small herd of antelopes, or springbucks, feeding.

“Lend me your rifle, Halliday—I can stalk one of these for breakfast, whilst you make a circuit to their left, showing yourself on the hill to attract their attention—I will creep down behind those bushes and get a shot.”

The *ruse* succeeded, and one of the fattest fell at Hugh’s discharge.

“Well done,” cried Halliday, running down to him, “this will serve for breakfast and dinner too—let us have him away to that bush further down, where we may get some sticks to kindle a fire.”

The operation of flaying their game, if not scientifically, was quickly performed, and the two hungry hunters were soon seated round a blazing fire, roasting their venison steaks on the point of a stick. Their ravenous appetites had scarcely been appeased, when a loud yell rang in their ears, and springing to their feet, they beheld a body of Caffirs bearing down upon them. With guns in hand, Hugh and Halliday stood ready prepared to meet

their assailants, resolved to sell their lives dearly, which the Caffir leader observing, he halted suddenly when within fifty yards of their position, and turning a spear he held with its head to the earth with one hand, held out the other in token of amity.

“ Ah !” said Halliday, “ that red captain don’t fancy one of our bullets through his carcass, and wants to get possession of our guns—the odds are ten to one against us, Fitzwarine—what shall we do ?”

“ If we could trust them to spare our lives,” replied Hugh, “ we might yet effect our escape.”

“ They are treacherous devils,” said Halliday ; “ but I know a little of their jargon and customs, and if they will swear to hold us harmless, we had better surrender.”

Halliday having by signs and a few words conveyed his intentions to the Caffir leader, of either dying fighting, or obtaining protection of their lives at his hands, by his solemn oath, the Caffir advanced alone to meet him half way, and with two fingers of his hand stretched out towards the moon, swore to

protect their lives and persons from all injury on laying down their arms—and then approaching nearer, offered his hand, which Halliday accepted, and beckoned to Hugh to come forward also and do the same.

These ceremonies concluded, at a signal from their leader, the other Caffirs, about twenty in number, advanced also, when Hugh and Halliday, having offered their guns, they were given to understand that, being now their prisoners, any attempt to escape would be punished with instant death.

Halliday having been questioned by the Caffir as to the fate of his companions, and his object in coming into their country, gave him to understand that their ship was sunk at sea, and that he was an American, not an Englishman, although obliged to take passage in an English ship, returning from the east to his own country. The Caffir leader laughing in disbelief of his story, Halliday became excited, declaring by gesticulation, and a few broken words of their language, that he was a free-born American, as free as himself, who owned no king—and that he knew the chief

of their nation, named Capellah, who would prove the truth of his story.

The mention of this prince's name caused Halliday and Hugh to be treated with greater respect than they would otherwise have experienced, which was further increased by Halliday showing them a small pocket compass, and telling them the needle always pointed to his own country. This was handed from one to the other with mingled looks of awe and astonishment, and returned to him again with great care; for the Caffirs being a very superstitious people, they regarded this little instrument as possessing some magical charms, and its possessor endowed with supernatural power.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE leader of the party, called Jeshura, into whose hands Halliday and Hugh had fallen, was a petty chieftain, owing allegiance to the prince of their tribe, whose dominions comprised about a hundred miles on the sea coast, and extended more than two hundred inland. Flanked on one side by the Cape territory, and being at variance with the English, Jeshura was bent on a predatory as well as warlike excursion, to carry off cattle, or fall upon any straggling party of their enemies he might chance to meet with.

The number of men under his command was about fifty, five of whom had been

killed and others wounded in their encounter with the survivors of the Juno, when left by Halliday on the verge of the forest. In revenge for the death of their comrades, all the English were killed, save two men (one the spokesman of the malcontents, who refused to obey Halliday's orders), reserved for a far more dreadful fate from the hands of these savages, by an escort of whom they were marched back with their arms bound to the Caffir village.

The party who had surprised Hugh and Halliday, seeing the good fare provided for them, ranged themselves round the fire, and having finished the remains of the antelope, again set forward over the plain, Hugh and Halliday marching in front with their leader. They had proceeded about two miles, when Hugh caught sight of another herd of springbocks, feeding some distance before them, at which he told Halliday he might get a shot, who pointed them out also to Jeshura, offering his companion's services to procure them more venison. The wily Caffir shook his head, and Halliday knowing his

fear of losing his prisoner, told him they might kill him instantly, if Hugh did not return ; on which, after a little more parley, the rifle was placed in Hugh's hands, who took a circuitous route to approach the herd, whilst the Caffirs stood still to watch the result.

The deer were grazing on a rising hillock, behind which Hugh calculated on approaching them ; but, to effect his object, it was necessary to make a wide circuit, and as he walked quickly away, being now out of sight of the Caffir band from the undulating nature of the ground, an almost irresistible temptation to escape seized upon his mind. He was fleet of foot, and with nearly a mile intervening between him and the Caffirs, he felt almost certain they could not overtake him. The thought of home and Florence Seaton inspired him with the strongest inclination to make the daring attempt ; but the idea of leaving Halliday to atone by his death for his broken faith, scattered all his hopes to the winds—he could not be guilty of an act

so dishonourable, and must therefore wait for some more favourable opportunity.

Hugh had been gone full half-an-hour—the deer were still feeding leisurely, and more than once Halliday began to suspect that he would take advantage of the opportunity to run for his life. The Caffir chief also began to cast ominous looks upon him, as signifying his connivance with Hugh's escape, when suddenly the faint report of the rifle reached them, and the whole herd were seen scampering in disorder over the plain, making towards the position which Halliday and the Caffirs occupied.

As they came nearer, the leader of the herd, espying his enemies, bounded suddenly aside in another direction, when one of the heaviest deer was seen limping along with a broken foreleg, some distance behind the rest, and stopping occasionally, as if incapable of going much further. As soon as the wounded animal became exposed to their view, a yell burst forth from the Caffir body, who broke loose, like a pack of hungry wolves on a trail of blood, and, without regard to their

chief or prisoner, were immediately scouring over the open in hot pursuit of their victim.

The Caffir chief and Halliday stood alone, the former cocking Hugh's gun, as in preparation of an attack from his prisoner; and Halliday, guessing what this meant, said, quickly:—

“Caffir, you have sworn to protect my life; I shall not attempt yours. The lad has killed another buck, which I see lying on the hill-side. Come, let us go to him. Your gun is loaded; you can shoot us both if we try to escape or injure you.”

“Lead on,” said the still wary savage, “I will follow;” and, with Halliday a few yards in advance, they were proceeding to the spot where Hugh stood, when a loud shout from his party proclaimed the capture of their victim, which had been brought down by their assigais, in throwing which they were very expert.

The Caffir chief now halted till the dead deer was brought up, when the whole party again advanced together, and great was their

delight on finding Hugh sitting down by the side of his game, which was one of large size, and exceedingly heavy. On the Caffir's approach, Hugh rose to meet their leader, offering back the rifle; but the Caffir was so pleased with his exploit, as well as his honesty, in not attempting to make his escape, that, patting Hugh on the shoulder, he gave him back the gun, motioning him to keep it, and shoot more game.

The whole party seemed to approve of this act by grins and grimaces; some, more pleased than the others, offering their hands to Hugh, in token of good-will, for the feast he had provided for them. Some time was occupied in skinning the deer, and distributing the joints for each man to carry, when their line of march was again resumed towards the out-settlements of the Cape.

At mid-day a jungle of thick grass and brushwood obstructed their progress, through which Hugh and Halliday were directed to take the lead, with guns in hand, the Caffirs apprehending an attack from lions. They had proceeded some distance through this

heavy mass of brushwood, when a loud roar was heard, and Hugh perceiving the grass agitated before him, fired instantly at the spot, when a huge male lion sprang up, shot through the body, and fell again, growling and tearing everything round him, in the agonies of death, till the Caffirs, rushing in, dispatched him with their javelins.

The lion, for the sake of his skin, was carried by four Caffirs to the other side of the jungle, where a large hog rushed out before Hugh and Halliday into the open ground, at which all three barrels were discharged in succession, the last bringing him down; but again recovering his legs, he set off at a slow, staggering gallop across the plain, followed by half a score of the foremost Caffirs, the others being too far behind and encumbered to join in the pursuit.

This chase became very exciting, the poor brute being too badly wounded to keep far in advance of his assailants, who, with yells of delight, continued throwing their darts at him with varied success, some missing, some sticking fast in the boar's hide, until, after a mile's

race, he was brought to bay, where, fighting and rushing at his foes—one of whom was knocked over in the *melée*, and his leg severely lacerated by the boar's tusk—he was finally dispatched by one of the most powerful Caffirs thrusting his javelin through his heart.

All being wearied by their morning's work, and the increasing heat of the sun, preparations were now made, under some trees near the jungle, for kindling a fire, and cooking their dinner, after which they lay down to rest for several hours.

When the sun began to decline, a consultation was held between Jeshura and a few of his chief men, which, from their glances towards Hugh and Halliday, the latter suspected had reference to them.

"There's something in the wind, now," said the latter to his fellow-captive, "some foraging expedition, I guess, from their pointing towards the settlement; and they are afraid to trust us with it or in it. They are treacherous devils, Fitzwarine; and I must be beforehand with them, or they may murder

us in cold blood, fearing we should escape in the night, and join the party whose cattle they intend carrying off. I must show a bold front in this matter; so you remain here, whilst I put in a word or two to prevent mischief."

As Halliday approached the group, the Caffir chief ceased speaking, and Halliday beckoning with his hand, he advanced alone to meet him.

"I know your thoughts and intentions," said Halliday, boldly; "you are bent on lifting cattle yonder," pointing towards the settlements, "and fear we shall take part against you, or escape."

The Caffir looked confused at this unexpected revelation of his thoughts, and regarded Halliday with astonishment.

"Hark ye, Caffir," he continued, "did my comrade yonder attempt escape when he had the chance? Will you trust us still, or not? We will neither leave you now, nor take part against you. And here's my hand on it. An American never breaks his word," he added,

raising his powerful frame to its full height, with a proud air.

Halliday's manner sent conviction to the Caffir that he might be trusted.

"I will trust you," he replied, offering his hand in return, "and you shall know our plans;"—which Halliday had already surmised, and were, therefore, easily explained;—that they intended reaching the premises of a large cattle-owner about the middle of the night, and drive off his herd to their own village.

"Ah!" said Halliday, "but the Boers will fire upon you if alarmed."

Jeshura nodded assent; but pointing to Hugh and himself, laughed, giving him to understand they must shoot in return.

Halliday, guessing his drift, signified compliance, although he saw clearly that Hugh and himself were to bear the brunt of a fight if there was one; and shaking hands again with the Caffir, he went to inform Hugh of the part they were expected to sustain.

"It can't be helped, Fitzwarine," Halliday

said, in answer to Hugh's remonstrances ; " it was our only chance—between a shot from a settler, or a javelin from a Caffir ; so we must make the best of a one-sided bargain."

" We might have made our own escape," replied Hugh.

" Not so, Fitzwarine ; for, saving my volunteering to join the party, we had been left bound in the hands of these bad-looking savages behind. Be patient awhile, and trust to my guidance. I have had dealings with the king, as he is called, of this tribe ; he will restore us to liberty, and give me a passport through his country, as he did once before ; so put a cheerful face on the matter, or they will mistrust us."

## CHAPTER XIV.

HAVING now rested a sufficient time to recruit their strength, in the evening the Caffir body again commenced their tramp, and at midnight halted within a mile of the farm-house, where another conference took place, to which Hugh and Halliday were admitted, and given to understand that they must keep watch on the building whilst they were engaged with the cattle, and shoot any of the farmer's men they might see coming out against them. One of the most crafty Caffirs was then sent forward to reconnoitre, who returned in about half an hour, with the in-

formation that a herd of some fifty cattle were lying in a small inclosure near the house, which was surrounded by a strong stockade of wood, the only entrance being close to the farm-window, by which the cattle could not be driven without immediately rousing the farmer's household and his dogs.

Halliday, seeing the chief puzzled at this unexpected difficulty, suggested their making an opening through the stockade at the furthest point from the farm, in which he volunteered to assist; and this proposition being hailed with delight by Jeshura and his chief counsellors, they began to advance stealthily to the scene of operations, the scout leading, with Hugh and Halliday close behind.

The wind had risen, and a few fleecy clouds occasionally drifting across the face of the moon, the night proved a favourable one for their enterprize; and there was a small grove of trees to screen the party from observation close to the stockade, where Halliday, assisted by Hugh, began to break an entrance, which

yielded easily to his Herculean strength (having worked in his youth as a Backwoodsman in America).

The Caffirs were not less surprised at his muscular power than at the dexterity with which he levelled the wooden barrier opposed to him, and through which a passage for two or three cattle abreast had been effected so quietly, and, to them, in a marvellously short time. The road being now open, the main body of the Caffirs withdrew some distance, to allow the cattle a free exit, two of the most crafty only being sent to drive them out, whilst Halliday and Hugh kept watch above the gap or gangway. Standing thus together, they had an opportunity of witnessing the manœuvres of these wily savages, who, having reached the upper side of the inclosure unperceived by shelter of the stockade, began crawling on their hands and knees towards the cattle, gradually moving them up towards the point they wished them to take. This was a work of time and some difficulty, the poor beasts facing about and looking disposed

to dispute the ground with their enemies, and at last the whole herd, being roused, clustered together, pawing the ground and shaking their heads in defiance.

The Caffirs then sprang to their feet, and began driving them with their spears, which produced the desired effect, although at the same time causing them to snort and bellow, thereby rousing the farmer's dogs, whose barking in turn roused the farmer and his sons. The window was opened, and the head of the old settler for a moment thrust out, just in time to see the last of his stock disappearing through the opening, when catching a sight of the Caffirs, a loud explosion of his heavy gun, causing more noise than mischief, followed. The whole body of Caffirs now joined in the foray, driving the cattle forwards at the top of their speed, with loud yells and shouts.

The old Dutch settler, with three sons as heavy-headed and heavy-tailed as their father, fearing from the loud cry of the savages that they would be too many for them, wisely

forbore making an attack upon them lest they might be worsted, and have his house burnt over his head, and contented himself with preparations to defend his castle during the night; resolving on the first peep of dawn to get a neighbour to assist him on horseback in pursuit of the marauders.

The wily Caffirs, suspecting this would be the case, made the best use of their legs, and had reached a large woodland tract some twelve miles in advance, where they were resting the cattle under the shade of the trees, when Halliday, who was with Hugh in the rear, heard the galloping of horses behind him, and turning round, beheld seven or eight men, mounted on rough horses, and with guns, about half a mile distant.

"Here they come," he said to Hugh, "helter skelter up the glade yonder," and putting his hand on the Caffir chief's shoulder, pointed them out to him also.

On a signal from their leader, the whole body crowded quickly together round him, to whom his orders were briefly made

known—four to proceed with the cattle, and the rest to stand prepared for fight. These directions had scarcely been given, when the boers, having approached within three hundred yards of their position, a loud yell was raised by the Caffirs, which caused their pursuers to halt immediately, who now for the first time, perceiving the number of the savages, appeared irresolute what to do.

The Caffir chief and his men, having shown their numbers, now as hastily filed off right and left, for the shelter of the trees, Halliday and Hugh having before adopted this precaution to escape observation; when a volley was poured in upon their retreating forms by the boers, which whistled through the trees, but did little damage. Having re-loaded their guns, the Dutch squadron were beginning again to advance, when Halliday whispered to Hugh—

“Take that horse on the right full in the breast, whilst I aim at the other on the left—it must be done—look here;” and he showed his coat sleeve, through which a bullet

hole appeared. “We must knock down the horses, if not the riders—quick, fire.”

On the discharge one of the poor horses reared bolt upright (being shot through the heart), and rolled over on his back, dislodging in his fall a second Dutchman from his saddle, with his dead carcass lying on his rider. The other horse, being shot through the body, plunged violently, throwing his rider also, and creating great confusion among the other horses, until he also fell dead.

On beholding this sudden check to their pursuers, a loud yell from the Caffirs rang from tree to tree through the wood, and the Dutchmen, finding such unexpected marks-men amongst them, were evidently afraid to advance further. Meanwhile, Halliday and Hugh, having quickly reloaded their guns, stood ready for any emergency—when a second volley from the Dutchmen sent the bullets again whistling about the tree behind which they were stationed.

“Give it ‘em again,” cried Halliday, “or the pigheaded fools won’t be satisfied;” and

down came two more horses, kicking and floundering on the ground, amidst the reiterated yells of the savages. This settled the business, for the leader of the Dutch party, having his arm broken by his horse falling upon him, advised a retreat, the dismounted men getting up behind their friends, and in this manner trotting briskly away from the scene of their disaster.

On the retreat of their pursuers, the Caffirs came forth from their hiding-places, their chief shaking hands with Hugh and Halliday, and expressing, as well as he could by signs and words, his thanks for their assistance. Dreading, however, another attack, Jeshura set forward immediately, leaving the dead horses as they lay, and on the third day reached his village in safety with his illgotten booty.

The other half of Jeshura's company, however, fared very differently. They had sent forward their two prisoners with an escort of four of their body, the remainder purposing to do a little in the cattle-lifting trade before

returning homewards ; and it so happened that they crossed the trackway of their comrades the day after they had passed along, some ten miles higher up the country, when, having lain down to rest under the shade of some trees, they were espied by a party of English soldiers, accompanied by the Dutchmen, who approached them unperceived, and when within distance, sent in a volley at these savages as they lay on the ground, or as the captain (who was a crack sportsman) expressed himself, “ fired into the brown of the covey ;” by which seven were killed on the spot, and the others, leaving the two muskets they had taken from the English sailors, fled precipitately into the wood.

This may appear a cowardly act on the part of an English officer—it is nevertheless true, being related to me by himself ; and as an excuse for such conduct, he told me that one of his men, having fallen into the hands of these savages, had been so mercilessly tortured and mutilated, and at last roasted to death, that he swore to give the “ red devils,” as he

called them, neither favour nor quarter, wherever or however he might catch them. This officer also carried *his own pistol*—that is, one reserved especially to shoot himself, rather than fall into their hands.

The Caffirs who had escaped returned the next day after their chief to the village or kraal, when, on making known the fate of their comrades, a violent outcry was raised by the wives and relations of the slain vowing vengeance against the prisoners, whom they demanded to be given into their hands for torture and death.

Jeshura had great difficulty in preventing Halliday and Hugh being forcibly taken away for this purpose, when, seizing Hugh's rifle, and desiring Halliday to stand by him, he swore he would shoot the first person who attempted to touch them. His address to his companions was short and manly.

"These two men are my prisoners," he said, "they were taken by my own hand alone, unaided by you—they are my property, as

the chief of your tribe—besides, they are not English, but Americans—friends also of Capellah, our prince, to whom I am bound to deliver them. Look also at that herd of cattle; through their means we obtained them—alone they fought with, and discomfited our enemies. The cattle are yours—I give my share of them to you, and the two English prisoners. Enough—Jeshura has spoken;” and with a lofty mien he stalked to his own hut, motioning Hugh and Halliday to walk before him.

Jeshura’s conduct being approved by some of the chief men who had accompanied him, and seen Halliday’s and Hugh’s brave and honest behaviour, no one ventured to question his authority, the person of a chief being held sacred; and he had just reached his own dwelling, when a rush was made for the two wretched Englishmen.

The frantic cries and lamentations of the women had roused the whole village, to wreak their vengeance on these miserable captives; and Jeshura, foreseeing

what would happen, and that at such a moment even his authority might be disputed—wisely withdrew Hugh and Halliday from the sight of his people, lest they might fall victims also to their frenzied excitement.

In his whole tribe—a fine, athletic race—Jeshura stood pre-eminent above them all, not less for his commanding stature, muscular strength, and courage, than for his noble mien and mind. Cruelty and treachery, the almost general characteristics of his nation, found no place in the heart of Jeshura; and although sometimes obliged to yield to their savage customs, he would take no part in the cruelties practised by his countrymen towards defenceless captives.

Jeshura stood at the door of his hut, his right hand resting on the rifle, surveying with dignified composure the proceedings of his people. The wretched prisoners having been stripped of their clothing, were bound to two stakes, and there left to the diabolical treat-

ment of their tormentors, amongst whom the women who had lost their husbands were the most conspicuous and fiendish. Screaming and yelling round them, they began first by spitting in their faces, and then stabbing their bodies with sharp knives and stones, cutting off their ears, fingers, and toes, and practising other most revolting cruelties—thus protracting their sufferings to the utmost limit human nature could endure; until wearied with their diabolical exertions, these fiends, by cutting out their hearts from their bodies, completed their work of death.

The screams and cries of the wretched men pierced through the hut to Hugh and Halliday, who shuddered with horror.

“This had been our fate too,” said Halliday, “had we resisted, and killed any of their party, or been sent here bound, instead of assisting in driving the cattle. These devilish women are worse even than the men, and will have their way with their hellish cruelties. It may be our fate still to fall into their hands,

although I believe Jeshura will protect us if he can. But keep your pocket-knife ready, which I shall use also against myself rather than suffer such tortures."

On hearing his name mentioned, Jeshura turned his head, and Halliday, advancing to him, said—

"Caffir, I would ask you a favour—will you grant it?"

"Speak," said the Caffir, "my ears are open."

"Promise to shoot me through the heart with my own rifle rather than deliver me into the hands of your women."

"You are safe under my roof," replied Jeshura, "my word is pledged for your lives; retire. When night comes I will take you from the village."

The Caffir chief knew that, having now tasted blood, the women and boys of his tribe, supported by the old warriors who had lost sons by the white men, would be clamorous to renew their games on the morrow against Hugh and Halliday, and he,

therefore, had already resolved in his own mind, without consulting another, to deliver his prisoners over to the protection of Capellah.

## CHAPTER XV.

AT midnight, when silence reigned through the village, Jeshura, motioning Halliday and Hugh to follow him, placing his hand on his mouth to keep silence, cautiously emerged from his dwelling. At the back stood some trees, under the shade of which he glided quickly, though stealthily, along. Halliday and Hugh followed in almost breathless anxiety, until they had left the village a good mile behind them.

They had reached a small hillock, from which everything could be seen around, and here, for a few moments, the Caffirs stood,

with strained eyes and listening ear, to catch any object or sound coming from the village, when, failing to detect any, he turned away, and resumed his course at a rapid pace, between a walk and a run, with which Hugh and Halliday could scarcely keep up ; but apprehending from Jeshura's haste and manner danger lurking still behind them, they pressed resolutely forward, when the Caffir chief, having gained the summit of a high ridge of hills, commanding an extensive view for many miles, again stood still to reconnoitre ; and being satisfied that his absence from the village had not yet been discovered, he proposed to Hugh and Halliday a little rest before proceeding further.

"I have put my life in your hands," he said, addressing them, "to save you from death, and keep my oath. You can take that now, and your liberty. But there are other bands of my race out between this and the settlements, with chiefs more powerful than myself ; and if you fall into their hands, you have seen what your fate will be. Your only

hope of safety is to claim the protection of Capellah, to whom I will conduct you. Make your choice ; you must go alone, for I should be thought a traitor if found escorting you towards our enemies' country."

" You are a noble chief," replied Halliday, offering his hand ; " I would defend your life at any risk of my own ; and if permitted once more to reach my native land, you shall know that an American does not forget his friend. Tell me, Jeshura, how I can repay your generous conduct towards us."

Jeshura spoke not, but glanced at the rifle in his hand.

" It is yours," said Halliday, handing it to him ; " you might have taken it before ; that is nothing. Shall I send you a score, with powder and ball ?"

" Too much," replied the Caffir, " one will do."

" No, Jeshura, they shall find their way to your kraal, if I bring them myself."

" Enough," said the Caffir, " my white friend shall be always welcome to Jeshura's hut."

Halliday having told Hugh that their only security now lay in seeking Capellah's protection, who would give him a passport through his dominions, they again set forward, with Jeshura for their guide, who, laying aside his former restraint, now conversed with them as well as he could make himself understood, in the most friendly manner ; and on the second day arrived at their destination without further adventures.

Jeshura having presented his two companions to his prince, who was also his father-in-law, gave a short account of his meeting with them, and the good service they had rendered him and his party, begging his protection for them, and a passport through his territory, as they were Americans, not English, saying also that Halliday had promised to send him a large quantity of rifles and ammunition as soon as he reached his native land.

The wily old king cast a suspicious, incredulous glance at Halliday, as Jeshura mentioned the present of rifles, which observing, Halliday said : —

"The King of the Caffirs has had reason to know that an American can keep his word. He has seen me before. Does he remember this?" producing a small trinket from his pocket.

Capellah now recognized the American, whom he made welcome to his court; and having an interpreter, a native Caffir, who had been sent to Cape Town to learn the English language, Halliday explained, through him, how he had been shipwrecked on his coast, and that he now wished to return as quickly as possible to America, hoping soon to have another barter with him for cattle.

Capellah, after listening attentively to all Halliday had to say, replied that he would see him the next day, and consigned him and Hugh to the care of one of his chief men, desiring they might be treated with all respect. In the evening they were visited by Jeshura, who remained with them some time, assuring them of Capellah's friendly intentions, and that they might expect a passport from him the next morning. Hugh and Hal-

liday again shook hands with the young Caffir chief at parting, renewing their promise of sending him the presents; and it was not without deep regret that Jeshura bid adieu to his white friends, to return to his native village.

## CHAPTER XVI.

ON the morrow Halliday obtained an audience of the king, but the wily Caffir, having heard from his son-in-law the promise he had made him of some rifles, gave him to understand that he was at liberty to go, but that his brother (meaning Hugh) must remain as a hostage until he returned. Halliday in vain pleaded his need of Hugh's assistance as a companion in his journey back to the English settlements, which Capellah at once met by offering an escort of his own men through his dominions ; and Halliday, seeing the Caffir king

had made up his mind on this point, wisely forbore pressing him further.

Poor Hugh was dreadfully disappointed at learning from Halliday the issue of his interview ; but at length brought to a more complacent state of mind by Halliday's faithful promise of going direct to Macgregor, and informing him of his captivity, with whose assistance he could procure the promised presents, and return to obtain his liberty.

"Cheer up, my brave lad," said Halliday, on parting with his friend ; "keep a stout heart, and with God's help I will not fail you; I will not revisit my native land until I have obtained your release."

It would occupy here too much space to relate Halliday's adventures and misadventures before reaching the bungalow of Macgregor, who, on hearing of Hugh's detention among the Caffirs, with his usual impetuosity set off instantly for London with the American, from which he proposed writing a line to Florence ; but on reflection, knowing the dangers with which Hugh was still surrounded, and the un-

certainty of his being yet alive, he resolved not to incur the risk of raising hopes in her breast which might not eventually be realised. He had also a natural propensity to mystery, delighting himself with the idea of giving her a joyful surprise ; and the Indian girl was left in the bungalow, with directions to write to him through his London agent.

We must now relate how it fared with Hugh whilst remaining at the court or *Great Place* of the Caffir king ; although by words we cannot convey to our readers the utter desolation and sinking of heart felt by him when left alone among this uncivilized people, dependent upon the life and safety of one man reaching his native land, to give intelligence of his existence ; and many weeks he knew, or months, must elapse before he could be relieved from his captivity. Before laying himself down to rest on his mat and skins, he prayed long and fervently to the Almighty disposer of events to aid and protect Halliday from all dangers by land and by sea, and permit him to reach Macgregor's abode in safety,

and casting all his hopes and cares on God alone, he rose refreshed from prayer, believing and trusting in His mercy.

More wearied in mind than body, yet feeling now comparatively safe from violence, he fell into a deep sleep, from which he was aroused the next morning at an early hour by a soft voice, although in a language unknown to him, and springing up, he beheld a handsome girl, the vermillion hue visible through her olive complexion, standing near his pallet, with a pan of new milk in her hand for his breakfast. This was Havilah, his host's daughter, who, touched by Hugh's disconsolate looks the previous evening, had brought this welcome offering with her own hand to cheer his heart in his captivity.

The kindness of this act, with the smile beaming on the face of this wild child of nature, struck Hugh most forcibly as an intervention of Providence in raising him up a friend so unexpectedly in this his hour of sore trial; and taking the milk in his left hand, he stretched forth his right, with a look full of

thankfulness to this generous girl, which she accepted with a sparkling glance from her full dark eyes, and then instantly withdrew.

The name of the Caffir to whose care Hugh had been consigned was Moshesh ; and calling to mind the accounts he had read of the Caffirs, he felt persuaded these people must be of original Jewish extraction. Other names he had also heard among Jeshura's companions, such as Eno, Jeshua, Tola (the grandson of Jacob), and Jeshub, which confirmed him in his opinion. Hugh had always carried about his person since leaving England a small pocket-Bible, with a few illustrations, in one of which Moses was represented as coming down from the Mount, with the Tablets of Stone containing the Commandments ; and as Moshesh entered the hut, Hugh showed him this print, giving him to understand by signs, first pointing to the picture, and then to his host, that both bore the same name, and were probably of the same family.

The Caffir's surprise could not be concealed at this extraordinary revelation ; he gazed stead-

fastly on the print, then on Hugh (not daring to touch the book) for several minutes, and pronouncing at last the words, "Soh, soh," disappeared from the hut. Moshesh soon returned with his *Inrad*, or interpreter, and sitting down, Hugh was desired to explain the history of this Moses, and how he could be connected with the Caffirs.

It is unnecessary to repeat the explanation given by him; suffice it to say that Moshesh understanding that the book in Hugh's possession contained a full history of his supposed relative, the reading of it was desired from the beginning, and the interpreter ordered to attend in the evening, to explain as Hugh read. This arrangement was hailed with pleasure by our young captive, as a means of occupying the time, which hung heavily on his hands, and he hoped also, under divine favour, one of conveying some knowledge of the true God to these unenlightened savages.

On the reading of the first chapter of Genesis, the Caffir asked how his white

father could know about the creation of the world ?

“ By the inspiration of the Great Spirit,” replied Hugh, “ who sent for him up to the top of a high mountain, to give these Commandments on the Two Tables, which you see in his hands, and by which his people were to be governed.”

“ Soh, soh,” repeated Moshesh, in a slow tone ; “ but where does the Great Spirit live ?”

“ Beyond the blue sky, above our heads, is another world far more beautiful than this, where God, the king of heaven and earth, reigns, surrounded by hosts of angels.”

“ I cannot see him,” said the Caffir, with an incredulous look.

“ Can my red father see the wind which fans his face, or the eagle when he soars out of sight ?” asked Hugh. “ God lives beyond where the eagle goes, too far to be seen by mortal eyes ; but there are more worlds than this ; look at the moon on a clear night, you see mountains there.”

"My eyes are dim," replied the Caffir; "I cannot see so far."

"Come, then, to the door of the hut, and look through this glass"—(Halliday had given it him)—"now what does Moshesh behold?" asked Hugh, as the Caffir stood gazing through it at the moon.

"He cannot tell," was the reply; and returning the glass to Hugh, he re-entered the hut. •

"The face of my Great Father is pale?" added Moshesh, in an enquiring tone, pointing to the picture in the Bible.

"So is a Caffir's on paper," replied Hugh. "Moshesh shall see;" and taking a piece of paper and pencil, he sketched the Caffir's face in a few moments, and handed it to him.

Moshesh could not suppress his surprise on beholding this portrait of himself, so quickly and truly executed. Muttering "Soh, soh," as he gave it to his interpreter to see also, and between whom a few words having passed in their own language, Moshesh said, "My white brother is a great doctor; he will read

more to us from the little book to-morrow night."

From that evening Hugh's lectures were continued almost daily, and he was treated with the greatest respect by Moshesh and his family, particularly by the young Havilah, upon whom it was evident his handsome face and winning smile had made a far deeper impression than his readings from the little book.

The Caffirs are naturally a lazy, indolent race, and as the cold of their winter sets in, seldom stir far from their kraal, the Fingoes being employed in tending and milking their cattle, as well as being hewers of wood and drawers of water. They have been, by several writers on their habits and customs, considered as of Arab origin, and some of their names are cited as confirming this opinion of their descent from Ishmael. How or why I am at a loss to discover. Now we are told in Scripture History that Ishmael was sent out from Abraham with his mother Hagar, the Egyptian, some five hundred years before

the name of Moses was known to the Israelites, then in bondage in Egypt. Moses was not a patriarchal name, but one given to him by Pharaoh's daughter. It is not likely, therefore, that the Ishmaelites (who had also become a numerous people) should have been acquainted with the name of Moses.

There is also another name amongst the Caffirs decidedly Jewish—Tola—he was the great grandson of Jacob, born to his son Issachar, and a child when this patriarch went down with his family into Egypt. We may also take Enoch, who is described by Moses in his book of Genesis as walking with God. Dodo, another name among the Caffirs, is also Jewish, Dodo having been one of David's mighty men of war. There is, moreover, a great similarity between the last syllable of many of the Caffir chief's names, such as Capellah, Sandillah, Gazallah, Umhala, with those of the Jewish people—Hezekiah, Jeremiah, &c. Jeshua is nearly identified with Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, after the death of Moses.

There are also two rites or customs observed by these Caffirs peculiar to the Jews, circumcision, and shaving the head for the dead, or for a vow—(see Numbers, chap. vi. 9, 18). During the reign of Solomon, we are told that “Hiram, king of Tyre, sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon; and they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon.” As to the locality of this Ophir, there are various opinions among the learned, some placing it in India, others in southern Africa, the latter being most probably correct, since navigation was so little understood in the time of Solomon, when sailors hugged the shore, seldom venturing far out on the open sea. Sofala is mentioned by oriental writers as abounding in gold, and silver, and precious stones, being called by them *The Golden Sofala*; and Bruce, the African traveller, has given very conclusive reasons why this country should have been the destination of Solomon’s fleet,

calculating the time it would take them to visit this country and return, which tallies exactly with that mentioned in the book of Kings.

It is more than probable, therefore, that these Caffirs take their origin not from Arabs (who although a wandering tribe on land, were little acquainted with navigation at that early period), but from Jews, a small number of whom, seeing the beauty of the the country, and disgusted with the severity of Solomon's rule, settled there during his reign, about two thousand eight hundred years since.

To account for the alteration in their language, we know the disposition of the Jews to intermarry with heathen nations (although forbidden by their own laws) and adopt their customs, and their extraordinary proneness to forget their allegiance to their God, even when visibly present to them, in his wonders and miracles ; by a continued succession of which they were delivered from Egyptian bondage, and sustained by his hand for forty years in

the wilderness. Now is it not more than probable that a party of these Jewish sailors, deserting their ships, settled in what we now call Caffir Land, and intermarrying with the Fingoe women, or aborigines of the country, hence has sprung this race of people, now degraded to the lowest state of infidels? Whether my ideas be right or wrong as to their first settlement in the country, there can be little doubt that these Caffirs are of Jewish origin; and I could adduce other reasons in support of this theory, which in a work of this class might be considered out of place.

Although treated with the greatest respect by Moshesh, Hugh Fitzwarine found that a strict watch was still kept over him lest he might effect his escape before Halliday's return with the promised rifles; but as love is said to laugh at locksmiths, Hugh had now (after being a prisoner for three months) become sufficiently acquainted with the Caffir language to hold converse with Havilah, during her father's absence from home, when called upon to attend upon the king; and he learnt

from her that she would effect his liberation, and become the partner of his flight.

Although expressing himself most grateful for her proffered aid, Hugh divined from her look and manner the true cause from which it sprung ; and since, under any circumstances, he could not have taken this young girl, handsome though she was, gentle and affectionate, for his wife, he felt obliged to decline her generous offer, on the plea of his honour being pledged to remain until his friend's return, independent of risking his life in such a rash enterprise, whereby he should involve her also in utter disgrace with her father. On Havilah hanging down her head to conceal the tears starting from her eyes at this disappointment of her hopes and wishes, Hugh, taking her hand in his, persuaded her in the most gentle tones to abandon the idea of such a dangerous project.

How far Moshesh profited by Hugh's lectures and instructions it would be difficult to say, since the Caffirs are a perverse, stiff-necked race, like their progenitors, the Jews ;

and like that self-willed and besotted people, “ seeing they would not see, and hearing they would not understand ;” but Hugh had reason to think, from the interest felt by Moshesh and his family (he had more than a score of wives) in his discourses, that a faint glimmering of the true light had at last broken forth on the hitherto darkened vision of this degraded infidel.

## CHAPTER XVII.

HALLIDAY's rash promise of rifles, made on the impulse of the moment, but on the fulfilment of which Hugh's release now depended, occasioned him and Macgregor a good deal of perplexity how they were to be conveyed in an English vessel, and through the English settlements, on account of the outbreak with the Caffirs ; and Halliday, to escape detection, was obliged to reduce his number to a dozen, which were secreted amongst agricultural implements ; and by representing himself as a new settler in that country, his cargo was not overhauled very

minutely. At his suggestion also, other things were purchased by Macgregor as additional presents to the King of the Caffirs.

On reaching the Cape, Macgregor and Halliday made immediate preparations for their journey by hiring a waggon to convey themselves and goods to one of the outside farms, the owner of which was known to Halliday, ; where, dismissing the waggon, Macgregor was to await Hugh's return ; and Halliday set out alone for Capellah's court.

The delight of Hugh on seeing Halliday, whom he had given up as lost, and his consequent dread of endless captivity among the Caffirs, may be conceived ; and Capellah was greatly pleased by his returning with as many little presents as he could conveniently carry, and quite overjoyed when informed of the cargo of goods left for him at the Dutch farmer's, which he was unable to convey further.

Halliday suggested that a body of his own

men should be sent with him and Hugh to bring these things away, relating the difficulties he had met with already in transporting them thus far ; and that if caught in this act, he should have been roughly treated by the English.

Fortunately for him and Hugh, Jeshura arrived that same evening, who overruled Capellah's intention of still retaining Hugh as a hostage, and the three friends (for such the young Caffir chief had deserved to be considered) left the next morning, accompanied by a large body of Caffir warriors under the command of Jeshura, for the Dutchman's farm, which, by devious wanderings through the woods, they reached without further molestation on the fourth night.

Halliday, with Hugh and Jeshura, advanced to the farm unaccompanied by the band of Caffirs (who remained at some distance), and were welcomed by the old settler, who was not sorry to have an opportunity of making acquaintance with the

Caffir king's son-in-law. The meeting between Macgregor and Hugh was most affecting, the recluse shedding tears of joy on folding him to his heart. Neither was Jeshura an unmoved spectator of the scene, who said to Halliday—

“Thy father, the white-headed warrior, is become a squaw over his lost son.”

But when, suppressing further emotion, Macgregor advanced to meet Jeshura with outstretched hand, the young chief winced under the vice-like grasp, and his dark eye quailed beneath the piercing gaze of the majestic Scotchman. Through Halliday his deep thanks were conveyed to Jeshura for his noble conduct in preserving the lives of his two sons (as Halliday called himself and Hugh) from the fury of his countrymen; and he was presented with several presents, the most valuable and highly-prized of which was a gold watch, on the back of which his own name was engraved, and a chain attached, which Macgregor placed round his neck.

After remaining an hour in the house, and partaking of what cheer it afforded, Jeshura signified to Halliday that he must return to his companions, and take advantage of the night to retrace their steps into their own country.

The band therefore were summoned to approach the farm, numbering fifty men, and the hands of all filled with the rifles, implements, and other presents, with which they appeared highly delighted ; and in addition, the old Dutch settler presented each with a glass of genuine Schiedam, which made their eyes twinkle, and put them in good spirits with their entertainer, promising him another visit on the first opportunity. On a signal from their chief, the band now filed off, leaving Jeshura alone, with Halliday and Hugh, for a few moments.

The young Caffir stood silently watching their retreating forms, until they were lost sight of. Then quickly seizing Halliday's hand, he almost whispered—

“Jeshura must join his tribe ; let his white

brother leave this place before the rising sun."

"I understand you, my noble-minded lad," replied Halliday, and with a firm grasp of his hand from Hugh, the young Caffir chief was gone.

Halliday did not neglect the warning he had received; and telling Macgregor that there must be some danger impending, they borrowed two rough horses from their host, and another from a neighbouring farmer, Macgregor paying handsomely for their hire, and the night being clear, they were within an hour trotting briskly away towards Cape Town, which they reached in safety; and as we have before recorded, Macgregor and Hugh arrived, after a fair voyage, once more in their native land.

Halliday having business to transact in London, which would detain him for a few days, parted with them there; but before proceeding to America, was presented by Macgregor with a handsome sum of money, to assist him in his trade, for his faithful adhe-

rence to Hugh — and a promise was exacted from him, that on his return to England, he would pay them both a visit in the North.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It may be supposed that Hugh Fitzwarine's sudden re-appearance, and Chaffman's as sudden disappearance, afforded full employment to the gossip-dealers in Heddington and Stanmore, where we find our little friend Pringle, on the second day after Hugh's return, in almost frenzied excitement, rushing about from house to house, retailing all she had been able to collect relative to what she called "this most wonderful jumble of events."

Since the departure of the Middletons Pringle had patronized Mrs. Watson, the sur-

geon's wife, as she could not get on with Mrs. Ramsey, who very wisely and properly declined to listen to any scandal or reports concerning her neighbours or parishioners. We find the little spinster, therefore, rushing into Mrs. Watson's parlour with her full budget of news, and her usual exclamation—

“ Oh, my dear ! have you heard—so wonderful—so extraordinary—I don't know how to begin, it really is so surprising !”

“ What is so wonderful and surprising, Miss Pringle ?” asked Mrs. Watson, quickly, all impatience.

“ Here's Mr. Fitzwarine come to life again, and Chaffman the lawyer has run away !”

“ Gracious me !—you don't say so !” cried Mrs. Watson, lifting up her hands in astonishment.

“ Yes, I do, my dear—and what's more, that Mr. Macgregor, the hermit, turns out to be Miss Seaton's uncle, and kicked Chaffman out of Forest Lodge, just two days before he was going to be married to his niece.”

"La ! poor thing—how I pity her to be so disappointed, with wedding-dress and all ready."

"No disappointment at all, my dear, I should say, to escape being the wife of such a villain."

"Well, perhaps it was a lucky escape, Miss Pringle, as you say ; but when a young lady has made up her mind to be married, she must feel dreadfully annoyed at the match being broken off so very unexpectedly, and her intended husband obliged to run away ; I am sure I should."

"Yes, my dear, if you were in love with the man ; but now it comes out Miss Seaton couldn't endure Chaffman, being engaged to young Fitzwarine before he left home ! It was all Mrs. Seaton's doing, who thought Chaffman a rich man, and forced her daughter to accept him ; but when it came to the point, Miss Florence wouldn't sign the marriage settlement, all that her mother could say or do, and declared before the company at Forest Lodge, and to Chaffman too, that come what

would, she never could marry him. And I had it from the best authority, that when Miss Williams sent home her wedding-dress, ordered by her mother, she couldn't bear the sight of it, and desired her maid to take it out of her room. So, my dear, you see this accounts for the number of suitors Miss Florence has refused ; she has been all along, without anybody suspecting it, in love with Mr. Fitzwarine, who, they say, has come home a rich man ; and Miss Seaton turns out to be a great heiress, and her uncle, Macgregor, or Mr. Seaton, as rich as a Jew. There, my dear, if this is not wonderful and surprising, I don't know what is."

" Well, it is extraordinary, Miss Pringle, if true."

" True, indeed, my dear," said the little gossip, with a toss of her head, " there's no doubt about it—it is in everybody's mouth ; the bells are ringing about it, by the old Admiral's orders—the boys in the streets hurrahing at Master Hugh's return ; and Mr. Ramsey told Mr. James, my baker, that it

was all true—and he is sure to know ;” with which Miss Pringle stalked out of the room, quite indignant at her word being questioned.

If our little gossip had on previous occasions done mischief by her tattle, she was now at least the instrument of circulating news highly in favour of Florence Seaton, who had been condemned by those unacquainted with the true state of the case, as about to marry Chaffman on account of his money. The truth was now spread far and wide, through town and country, and the character of Florence rose fifty per cent. in public estimation for the noble sacrifice she had been so nearly making to please her mother. Florence Seaton was quoted as an example of filial obedience deserving all praise.

We must now revert to Forest Lodge, where we find that the first use made by this dutiful and affectionate daughter of the money transferred to her by Mr. Seaton, was to purchase a close carriage and pair of horses for her mother, that she might be enabled to

take a drive every day the weather permitted. Mrs. Seaton was entirely ignorant of this arrangement, until one fine afternoon in April the carriage and horses appeared at the hall door, when on asking Florence what visitors had arrived, she threw herself on her mother's neck, saying, "None, dearest mamma ; the carriage and horses are yours, and I am come now to ask you to take a drive with me ; Dr. Watson says it will do you so much good."

"My own dearest, dutiful child," exclaimed Mrs. Seaton, "how could you think of this extravagant luxury for me?"

"We are all concerned in it, dearest mamma—my uncle, the Admiral, and Hugh ; so it is useless your blaming me alone."

"But, my dear Florence, we cannot afford such an expense."

"Indeed, dearest mother, we can ; and Hugh declares you shall keep your carriage, or he will not allow me to spend half the year as I intend at Forest Lodge ; so let me put on your shawl, for he is waiting in the hall to

take us our first drive, and will be greatly annoyed if we disappoint him."

The diamonds and other jewels for which Hugh had incurred such perils were valued at fifty thousand pounds, which (after a selection made by Florence for her own wearing, and as a memorial of his adventures) he converted into stock in the funds, so that, with his previous income and Florence's legacy, they would, when married, be in affluent circumstances, with the prospect of succeeding to Mr. Seaton's large fortune. Neither was this all, as their kind-hearted uncle insisted on giving them, during his lifetime, two thousand a-year in addition. With these increased means, therefore, an increase was made to the household at Forest Lodge, by the addition of a coachman and groom, whereby old Donald's shoulders became eased of a considerable share of work ; but he would still superintend the kitchen garden, in which he took great delight, having a gardener under his control. In short, Donald continued, as he always had been, the recognised

master over every one and everything at the Lodge ; and since Mrs. Seaton's illness, the arrangement of everything having rested in his hands, his fidelity was now rewarded by his mistress's entire confidence. Donald felt proud of this trust—proud of his position—and more than proud of his *two bairns*, as he called Hugh and Florence. Donald was chief housekeeper and head cook,—in fact, house-steward ; and knowing his mistress's taste, Mrs. Seaton allowed him to cater for her as he pleased.

“ Well, Donald,” asked Hugh, after returning from their drive, “ what have you ordered for dinner, as Miss Florence” —(who was leaning on his arm)—“ and myself are exceedingly voracious ? ”

“ Aweel, Maister Hugh, ye will find aneugh to satisfy yer langing ; there's a wee bit o' salmon frae the Tweed, and a pair of fowls for the leddies.”

“ Which means, not for the gentlemen, eh, Donald ? ”

“ Our poultry-yard, Maister Hugh, is get-

ting rather thin just noo, but there's a fine fillet o' veal, with a ham on the sideboard, for the Admiral and yersel, and ony fresh comers ; and for second course, Maister Hugh, as we are rather put to at this time o' year, I stoppit the throttle of the auld guinea cock, always cackling and boeing about the yard, like a chattering Frenchman."

" And a famous tough morsel he will prove, Donald," added Hugh. .

" Na, na, Maister Hugh, he's been hanging in the larder these three weeks past, and altho' the thews o' his legs may prove a wee bit toughish or so, the flavour o' him is as good as a muircock."

" Just suit the Admiral, by Jove !" cried Hugh, laughing ; " so come along, Florence, I must give you a brisk walk, my love, after your drive, to bring back the colour to your cheeks. Don't think me a gourmand, Florence, because I asked Donald about the dinner, for I seldom trouble myself about eating and drinking ; but the old man likes to be asked these questions, giving him importance

as Major-domo ; and truth to speak, my dear girl, Donald believes nothing could go right here without him."

" He is a dear, faithful old man, Hugh."

" Yes, my dear ; and were he your grandfather, he could not exercise greater authority. Everybody fears Mr. Macrae more than Mrs. or Miss Seaton ; and he considers Forest Lodge, and all appertaining thereto, precisely as his own property. With him it is our house, our garden, our poultry-yard, our game, our fish, and our bairn, meaning yourself, my love ; and I should no more think of marrying you without Donald's consent and presence to witness the ceremony, than I should think of flying."

" Oh, Hugh, how can you be so silly ?"

" My dear girl, I am not silly, begging your pardon, but sensible in yielding to every reasonable wish of your old faithful servant, who has also proved himself such a true friend to me. An honest man is the noblest work of God, whether rich or poor, master or servant ; I would not do violence to Donald's

feelings for the world. He carried you in his arms to the baptismal font when a child, and with God's permission he shall witness your marriage vow to Hugh Fitzwarine."

"And so he shall, my own dear Hugh."

With the return of genial weather Mrs. Seaton began to improve in health and strength, although still occasionally indulging the most bitter reflections on her conduct to her daughter, of which she could not wholly divest her mind when retiring to her own room; but Florence's cheerful manner and happy smile once more gladdened her heart, and she felt too deeply thankful for her child's bright prospects, to betray any remorse in her presence to damp her spirits.

Mr. Seaton now often paid her a visit, and had been prevailed on by Florence to have a room prepared for him at the Lodge when he dined there. The piano had been tuned, and the evenings were enlivened by music and singing.

"Ah! my dear boy," the Admiral would say, when listening to Hugh and Florence,

" this puts me in mind of happy days, yet not so happy as these ; I then had my doubts and misgivings about my boy and girl becoming man and wife, and I thought we should be run down by that French-looking craft, Sir Everard, with his Buonaparte figure-head, who, it appears, has been captured at last by a little corvette, or brunette—for, wonderful to relate, report goes he has married a gipsy."

"A gipsy!" exclaimed Florence, in surprise. "Oh! no, Admiral, you are joking."

"Indeed I am not, my pet ; farmer Robinson says he knows it to be a fact that he has married old Ishmael's daughter, whose tent used to be pitched on the moor, between Hawkwood and Heddington."

"Well, then," said Hugh, "if that is really the case, he has married one of the prettiest girls out of Christendom, for I knew old Ishmael well, and have often seen his daughter ; but how that haughty, supercilious man of the world could be brought to bow down his neck to such a yoke, passes my comprehension."

"There is a mystery about it yet," replied the Admiral ; "but Robinson's story is, that he was caught by Ishmael's sons making love to their sister, and that they gave him the option of instant death or instant wedlock, and Sir Everard chose the latter ; and that having taken his bride to Paris for the winter, to rub off a little of the gipsy tan, Sir Everard and Lady Hilston are expected at Hawkwood next month."

## CHAPTER XIX.

FLORENCE, on returning one afternoon with Hugh from a walk, was not a little surprised to find Captain Mordaunt sitting with her mother in the drawing-room, whom she had not seen since they met at Bertie's ball. The recollection of what had passed then between them caused a slight blush to rise on her cheek ; but it was for a moment only, and she advanced immediately to meet him, as he rose from his chair, with much cordiality, and after offering her hand, said—

“ Allow me to introduce your brother’s

companion on his voyage to India—Mr. Fitzwarine.”

“ I am most fortunate,” replied Mordaunt, “ in making the acquaintance of one to whom my brother felt, and expressed himself under so many obligations ; and,” he added, “ I cannot regard you, Mr. Fitzwarine, otherwise than as a friend, from your great kindness to him.”

“ I hope he was well, and making progress in his profession,” replied Hugh, “ when you last heard from him, for I shall always feel an interest in his welfare ; he is a kind-hearted and affectionate lad, and if you will favour me with his address, I shall have great pleasure in writing to him, which I promised to do on returning to England.”

From this time Mordaunt and Hugh became friends, and the former remarked, when they were on more intimate terms—

“ I can understand now, Fitzwarine, why Miss Seaton accepted me twice as a partner on our first introduction at Bertie’s ball, and her curiosity to know so much about my

brother's passage out to India. I was, however, silly enough to attribute this preference to another cause—a very favourable impression made by my own handsome person on the young lady's heart at first sight, for which vanity she has probably told you she was under the necessity of inflicting a little well-merited reproof."

"There you are mistaken, Mordaunt, since Florence has never mentioned your name to me at all."

"Well, she is a kind-hearted, generous girl, not less amiable than she is beautiful, and I must candidly confess I was desperately in love with her, and am still of the same opinion that I shall never find her equal; but as you are her first and only choice, I can and do congratulate you, Fitzwarine, on possessing the love of that sweet girl; although I was dreadfully annoyed, and grieved too, when I heard she had accepted that smooth-tongued scoundrel, Chaffman."

"Many thanks for your good wishes, Mordaunt, and I sincerely hope you may be blessed

with a wife deserving your full confidence and love. By the way, Florence has a young friend just returned to England, with whom she spent some time in Italy, coming to pay her a visit shortly, and by her account just the girl to suit your ideas."

"I fear not, Fitzwarine," he replied, sadly; "you know the trite saying, that 'a burnt child dreads the fire;' and the scorching I have had is likely to make a very lasting impression on my mind. But I hope you won't be jealous of me when you are married, but allow me sometimes to witness your happiness with your wife, for whom and yourself I shall ever feel great regard."

"You shall always find a hearty welcome from us both at the old Abbey," replied Hugh, "whenever you like to come."

The friendly relation now subsisting between Mordaunt and Hugh afforded much pleasure to Mrs. Seaton (with whom Mordaunt had always been an especial favourite) and Florence also, who esteemed him highly for his many good qualities, so that he be-

came a frequent guest at Forest Lodge, as well as at the Abbey, when Hugh dined at home, which, by the way, was not very often just now.

The month of May had now arrived, with all its vernal freshness of budding leaves and opening flowers. The bloom had re-visited the cheeks of Florence, who burst forth from the chilly effects of her wintry trials into her former youthful beauty and buoyancy of spirits, and the Thursday in the last week of May had been fixed for her union with Hugh Fitzwarine, or, as Donald called it, *our wed-ding*.

At the beginning of May, also, Florence's friend, Miss Chichester, reached Forest Lodge — a fine, handsome girl, resembling Florence in cheerfulness of disposition, but of a more piquant style of beauty ; in fact, just the person that ten men out of a dozen would fall in love with almost at first sight ; and on nearer acquaintance, her beauty became her least attraction, for although highly educated and accomplished, she possessed such gentle-

ness of mind and gracefulness of manner, with such a quiet, modest deportment, that no one could know her well without liking her ; and Mordaunt, after a few walks in the glen with her, Hugh, and Florence, began to feel a little glow of warmth towards her kindling in his heart, which the genial May breezes conduced to fan into a flame ; and Hugh, remarking his attentions, asked him one day, when they were alone, what he thought of Fanny Chichester.

“ Well,” he replied, frankly, “ I think very highly of her, and certainly the more so from her being Florence’s friend ; for that I am sure she never would have been without reciprocal ideas and feelings.”

“ Well, will she suit you, Mordaunt ?” asked Hugh, abruptly.

“ That’s not the question, exactly, Hugh ; —but should I suit her ? Although—mind—I am not positively in love with her yet. But this is a dangerous month to be walking with a pretty, interesting girl, and the birds all making love around one. It would come to

that, perhaps, very soon, Fitzwarine ; and I will candidly confess to you, that, had I not once loved Florence Seaton, I should have preferred her friend to any other girl I have ever seen.”

“ That is precisely my feeling too, Mordaunt ; and as I have ascertained from Florence that she is not in love with any other man, you will start fair, at any rate. But in affairs of this kind I never advise any one ;— so make your own game.”

“ Well, Fitzwarine, but your wedding-day is drawing on, and then, I conclude, Miss Chichester leaves Forest Lodge. I have known her too short a time to propose, supposing I had decided to do so ; and we may never meet again.”

“ Then we will cut this gordian-knot for you, Mordaunt, if you really take so deep an interest in Florence’s friend. She can ask her to remain a little longer with her mother, which I know she would do to oblige Florence, during our absence.”

On Mordaunt’s demurring to this proposition, Hugh said—

" You may trust to my discretion in this matter, and no allusion shall be made to our conversation now—not even to Florence will I give a hint of your *penchant* for her friend, although I could safely trust her. It will be sufficient for me to say that I think Fanny would be a great comfort to her mother, just on our leaving Forest Lodge."

" Well, Fitzwarine, I know you are not the man to betray a friend's confidence, and I should like the opportunity of seeing more of Miss Chichester."

" And I hope," added Hugh, " on my return to find you engaged to her, for this reason, Mordaunt, because I firmly believe she will make you an excellent wife, and you will make her a good husband, if I am not mistaken in your true character; and, to confess the fact, you are one of the very few men I have ever met with, whom I would wish to make my friend. Now, what say you to taking Ashton Hall, which Howard intends to let, and living near us, during your father's lifetime? You will find us, I hope,

pleasant neighbours, and you shall share in all my shooting, fishing, &c."

"My dear Fitzwarine," replied Mordaunt, "it would afford me the greatest pleasure to live near so kind-hearted and generous a fellow as yourself, and if Fanny will take me for better or worse, I will take Ashton Hall. But you must promise me, Fitzwarine, not to say a word at present to Florence on this subject."

"That I do most readily, Mordaunt; but I may tell you that Miss Chichester has a good fortune of her own, and, as you know, is well-connected. So now pursue your own course."

A few days before that fixed for the wedding, Mr. Seaton had invited himself to dine at Forest Lodge, desiring Florence to ask Mrs. Fitzwarine, but no other person, to be of the party. His niece, as usual, complied with his wishes, without comment or remark, save to her affianced husband, who, to her enquiries as to some further mystery of her uncle, merely smiled in a significant manner.

"Do tell me, dear Hugh," she said, "what my uncle means, for I see you are now in his secret."

"Dare I betray, Florence, a secret of the Macgregor? But I will tell you thus much, my love, that it will prove, I believe, rather an agreeable surprise to yourself, and more especially so to your mother; at present, however, you must suppress your curiosity."

The evening so anxiously expected by Florence arrived, when, after dinner, Mr. Seaton, turning to her mother, said—

"I have a toast to propose, my dear Mary, which I am quite sure you and our friends now assembled will honour by a bumper—'Health and happiness to Lord Fitzwarine.'"

"But who is Lord Fitzwarine?" enquired Mrs. Seaton.

"Your daughter's choice, dear Mary, and your brother's heir."

The amazement of Florence at this announcement became manifest to all; she started from Hugh's side, casting on him a look of mingled surprise and reproach, and

then sinking back in her chair, faintly said—  
“Oh! Hugh, why have you kept back this  
from me?”

“It is my doing, my child,” replied her uncle, “and the last mysterious act of Macgregor’s shall now be explained. It was the wish of Hugh’s father, in which his mother joined, that, in their reduced circumstances, the title should be suppressed for a time, until brighter prospects might open to their son. By this prudent resolve Hugh also consented to abide, until some twelvemonths ago, when, thinking you about to accept Sir Everard Hilston, partly, perhaps, on account of his title, he consulted me, with the view of making known to your mother his real position. My answer to him was, ‘If Florence Seaton would marry any man for his title or estate, she is neither deserving your love nor my further care. Maintain your secret until you have my consent to reveal it.’ That secret has, therefore, been observed by him, as others committed to his keeping, even from you, my dear girl, until your uncle thought proper to make

it known—and his entire confidence in me has gained my whole heart and affections. I wished to test your faith also, my dear Florence, whether you loved my boy for himself alone. A title sounds very captivating to a young lady's ear—Lord Fitzwarine might have proved more attractive than plain Mr. Hugh ; that was my impression of yourself many months ago. I need not say that at our last meeting in the glen, that opinion became completely changed. I saw then, from your agony of mind, that you loved him for himself alone ; and now, my dear Mary," addressing Mrs. Seaton, "you will, I think, admit that, even in a worldly point of view, I have not provided badly for your daughter. Mothers, I know, are generally anxious—too anxious—to obtain wealth and honours for their children, to which, when allied with worthy characters, there can be no objection ; but without the latter, they are the mere casket without the jewel. In Hugh Fitzwarine I believe and trust all these requisites are united. He has rank and wealth sufficient

to support him in his proper sphere, without absurd ostentation ; and if that is not enough, I can give him more. But, beyond this, he possesses those virtuous and honest feelings which exalt mankind far above all riches or titles. His filial love has been long known to me ; and as the schoolfellow and early friend of his father, I have now secured for his son that greatest of all earthly blessings, a modest, lovely, and most loving wife."

"Hurrah !" cried the Admiral, tossing off his glass of wine, "I always thought that lad of noble blood from our first meeting. May God bless Lord and Lady Fitzwarine ; and now I must ask permission to propose a toast also—' Health and long life to our generous pilot, who has towed our ship's crew through so many rough breakers safely to shore.' "

The fourth morning after this party, Mor-dau nt was standing by the side of Fanny Chichester in the parish church of Stanmore, whilst Hugh and Florence were exchanging their vows at the altar. The assemblage of friends was small, consisting only of Mr. and

Mrs. Seaton, Lady Fitzwarine, Admiral and Mrs. Bowen, and the worthy Vicar's wife, Ramsey being the officiating clergyman, and Miss Chichester and Caroline Middleton the only bridesmaids. No others had been invited, save old Donald, to be present at *our wedding*; but the church was thronged with spectators, and amongst them our little gossip, Pringle, who had ensconced herself in the pulpit (to the no small merriment of the congregation), in order to have a full view of the proceedings.

Being a diminutive little body, she had raised herself on Ramsey's kneeling-stool, with spectacles on nose, surveying the scene below with the greatest complacency, believing all eyes were bent towards the same objects; but, on the conclusion of the ceremony, the little spinster, in her haste to descend from her exalted position, upset the stool, which, in turn, upset her down the few steps into the reading-desk below.

“Dang that little busybody!” cried Farmer Robinson, who was seated in the pew be-

neath ; “it sarves her right—she’s always peering and poking into places where she’s no business ; she’s paid for peeping this time, that’s one comfort,”—as the gossip was wringing her arm, from a sprained wrist, and making wry faces ;—“and there’s another thing—she can’t make up any more lies about Miss Florence going to be married to half-a-dozen men she never cared for.” As Hugh passed down the aisle with Florence on his arm, he said, “God bless ye, Master Hugh, and yer bonnie bride ! But don’t ye take her across the salt water.”

“No, no, my old friend, we shall soon return again,” was the quick reply.

On the bridal party reaching Forest Lodge, Florence exchanged her wedding for a travelling dress ; but the parting with her mother threw a momentary shade over her otherwise all complete happiness, who, retiring to her own room, could not suppress her tears, now the time had arrived for her only child to leave her maternal care and protection.

“My own dearest mother,” said Florence,

" do not grieve thus at our short separation, for dear Hugh has proposed himself our returning to Forest Lodge after our little tour, if you will receive us, and that I shall remain with you as long as I like. Only reflect, dearest mamma, how happy my prospects now are, to what they once were. Have we not cause to be thankful?"

" Yes, indeed we have, my child—you must excuse my weakness, but you do not know a mother's feelings."

" I should have grieved most truly, dearest mamma, had it been my lot to leave you for a distant home; but I can only now rejoice that I shall never be far from you, so that we can meet every day or hour—is not that the greatest comfort to us both?"

" Yes, my darling, I am truly thankful for all the Almighty's mercies, and may he soon restore you to me again ;" and with one more fond, fervent embrace, Florence ran hastily down stairs, her tears still falling, and springing into the carriage in waiting, was whirled away with Hugh on their wedding trip.

On the parting of very dear friends and relations, those who are left behind generally feel the separation most acutely. Here, however (Mrs. Seaton excepted), the case was the reverse; for Mr. Seaton, who gave Florence away to Hugh, and the Admiral, were in the most exuberant spirits at the realisation of their wishes; and old Donald's face presented an uninterrupted succession of smiles from morning until past midnight, when he became rather uproarious from the effects of "our wedding." In short, Donald, by Mr. Seaton's permission, had gay doings in the servants' hall; a huge wedding-cake, and lots of punch, being provided for his select party of friends, who kept up their festivities until a late hour in the morning.

From Mrs. Seaton's weak state of health, coupled with the unpleasant affair regarding Chaffman, the marriage of her daughter passed without any outward manifestations of rejoicing common on such occasions; but Mr. Seaton would not permit things to pass so quietly in the village, where, with Hugh's

concurrence, a feast was provided for the farmers and poorer classes in a field near the Abbey, which, with rustic games on the green-sward, commenced on Thursday afternoon, and was continued until Saturday night. The management of this extraordinary entertainment (Mr. Macgregor, as he was still called, always doing extraordinary things) was entrusted to the gipsy and Hugh's bailiff, Macpherson, who, since Hugh's return, had become a much greater man than before—not in size, which was unnecessary, since he looked like a descendant of Anak—but in importance ; and we must give these two masters of the festival credit for preserving the greatest order throughout the proceedings, which terminated with a grand display of fireworks, to which the whole neighbourhood was attracted. Such a scene had never been witnessed since Stanmore had become a village, and the rumour of it spread far and wide throughout the whole county.

Mr. Seaton was not present, but the Admiral attended every day to see that things

were done properly, and his jovial face was hailed with delight whenever he appeared joining in their festivities, and like a jolly sailor, enjoying the fun with heart and soul. Captain Mordaunt also, and Miss Chichester, were seen wending their way arm in arm through the throng, the captain politely suggesting the necessity of thus escorting her through the crowd ; and little Pringle, who was of course there, whispered to her friend Mrs. Watson, as they passed them—

“ There will be another wedding soon.”

“ Where ?” asked her companion earnestly.

“ Oh ! I can’t tell you yet, my dear,” replied our little gossip.

“ Pray do, Miss Pringle, it shall go no further, I assure you.”

“ Well—no—I must not now ; but you shall be the first to hear ;” and Miss Pringle, with a consequential air, looking mysterious with her little twinkling eyes, strutted on.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THREE weeks have passed—it is a bright sunny evening in June—the hour five o'clock. A small party is assembled in the drawing-room at Forest Lodge. The Admiral is there, and his wife—Mr. Seaton, Lady Fitzwarine, Miss Chichester, and Captain Mordaunt. Two other guests are expected at the dinner-table that day. Mr. Seaton and the Admiral are standing at one window, Mordaunt and Fanny Chichester at the other, the latter playing with her watch, which the Captain takes from her hand without resistance—and it is returned again with a few words in a low tone, raising a heightened colour on her cheek. Suddenly the sound of

a small cannon reverberated through the house, fired by old Donald from one of the turrets on the roof.

“Hurrah!” shouted the Admiral, “they are coming—the signal gun of Donald.”

A rush is heard overhead—every woman servant in the establishment is at the bedroom-windows—all eyes are fixed on the lodge gates. Some half a mile distant, a travelling carriage with four horses is passing through the now vacant space.

“Here they are,” cried the Admiral, “I see them now.”

The carriage approaches at a steady pace—there is no whipping and spurring of the poor jaded horses, which have come the last stage of ten miles under a broiling sun. They are trotting leisurely up the drive. The front door is thrown wide open by Donald, who stands on the steps. The Admiral and Mr. Seaton, with the whole household, are in the hall—the carriage is drawn up, and Hugh springing from it, hands Florence out. She is caught by her uncle to his heart, and in another moment is in her mother’s arms. A

warm embrace followed from Lady Fitzwarine, and cordial welcomes from her other friends —after which, with her mother leaning on her arm, she retires to her own apartment.

Ten minutes before the dinner hour, Florence entered the drawing-room, more radiant in beauty than she had ever appeared before. Her elasticity of spirits, and cheerful, bewitching smile had returned, and the expression of her soft, lustrous eyes gave evidence of her happy state of mind, now relieved from all anxiety. The change which had been effected in her personal appearance and manner struck all more forcibly when she entered the drawing-room in her evening dress.

“My darling pet,” said the Admiral, “I need not ask how matrimony agrees with you, since positively, during all the time I have known you, I never saw you looking more lovely than now.”

“My dear Admiral,” replied Florence, “you must not pay me such flattering compliments, or Hugh will be jealous.”

“I don’t care a fig more for him, now he is

my Lord, than I did before ; but I suspect, my dear, he has been touching up your cheeks with a little rouge, to set you off to the best advantage on your first return home, lest your friends should observe how pale you had become from his bad treatment."

" There, Admiral," replied Florence, laughing, " to use your own phrase "you have made a bad shot," for Hugh cannot bear either scents or cosmetics, were I disposed to use them."

" All the better, my pet—but who do you think I met the other day in Heddington, once a most particular friend of yours?" laying an emphasis on "most particular."

" Lady Purvis, perhaps?"

" No, my pet—a gentleman."

" Then I am at a loss, Admiral, unless it was Mr. Middleton, who is the only particular gentleman friend I ever possessed, except my uncle and yourself."

" Well, then, he was no other than my old enemy, Bony the Second, but so altered as to the cut of his jib, that I should have passed him by, save for his hailing me with—' How

do you do, Admiral Bowen ?' This made me turn about, on which Sir Everard held out his hand, making particular enquiries about yourself and Hugh, when you were expected home, &c. &c., and concluding by saying he should do himself the honour of calling at Forest Lodge with Lady Hilston. I never saw a fellow more altered, except by the yellow fever. By Jove ! he has become as gentle as your little dormouse."

"I am glad to hear it, Admiral, although you know Sir Everard was never a particular favourite with me ; but Caroline told me of the complete change in his manners and ideas, so that I hope we may become sociable neighbours."

"I should like you to know his wife, Florence," Mr. Seaton said, " who is placed in a very awkward position for a girl of her age and inexperience in our social customs ; she would, I think, have been far happier with her own tribe. But as the wild bird has been caught and caged from its natural state of liberty, the forms and ceremonies of civilized

society will prove irksome to her at first, and you, my dear girl, will, I know, assist with your counsel this reclaimed child of the desert."

"Indeed I will most cheerfully, my dear uncle," was the reply.

"I conclude, sir," remarked the Admiral, "that Lady Hilston claims some affinity with our master of the ceremonies at the Stanmore feast?"

"She is a niece of Caleb, the gipsy," replied Mr. Seaton, "of whose honesty and fidelity I have had the strongest proofs. She is, moreover, of very high family, and can trace her genealogy for many generations in a princely line, and I believe, Admiral, you will find in Hagar the gipsy qualities which will rather astonish you."

"By Jove! sir, she must have been something extraordinary to nail our friend, Bony the Second; but they do say he had the choice only of taking a gipsy wife, or being sent post haste to certain dark dominions."

"There you are misinformed, Admiral—

quite in the dark yourself, for, to my certain knowledge, Ishmael positively refused at first to let his daughter marry Sir Everard Hilston, and at last insisted on his taking three months to consider, before he would allow her to become his wife."

"Well, it seems wonders will never cease in this part of the world," replied the Admiral; "what strange events have happened! And now it turns out that Sir Everard has married the young Queen of the Gipsies. Well, all's well that ends well; and as my pretty craft here has now come safe into harbour, I say God be praised for all his mercies! And there comes Donald to announce dinner, so now, my Lord Hugh, I shall take your wife away from you," on which he offered his arm to Florence.

We cannot, if we would, depict the happiness of this now united and joyous circle of relations and friends; and Hugh's quick eye detected something in the manner of Mordaunt towards Fanny Chichester, satisfying him that the proposal had been made and

accepted, in which, after dinner, he was confirmed by his friend.

“Then,” said Hugh, shaking him warmly by the hand, “I believe your happiness will be as complete as mine. It cannot be greater, my dear fellow, and I trust will not be less ; but have you spoken about Ashton Hall ?”

“Yes, my dear Hugh, and have clenched the bargain for seven or fourteen years ; in fact, I believe the great inducement for Fanny to accept me was to be near Florence, to whom she is so excessively attached, as I had, previously to proposing, mentioned my intention of taking this place, provided I could find a wife like Florence to share it with me.”

A few days after, whilst the same party were assembled, Sir Everard and Lady Hilston were ushered in by Donald. In truth Sir Everard was most anxious to make his wife acquainted with Florence, and the kind, friendly manner in which she was received by her confirmed his high opinion of her generous disposition.

On seeing Mr. Seaton Hagar drew back,

abashed at his presence, when, offering her his hand, he said, “ Daughter of Ishmael, thou art welcome to thy father’s friend, and as thou wilt need counsel in thy new sphere of life, seek it here,” placing her hand in that of Florence. “ Thou may’st safely trust the niece of Macgregor.”

“ You remember me also, don’t you?” asked Hugh, now approaching, “ with my white setters, to which you took a great fancy?”

“ Oh, yes, indeed I do,” she replied with a deep blush, extending her hand.

“ Then you have fallen amongst friends, you see, Hagar,” replied Hugh, cheerfully, “ who will always feel a deep interest in your welfare.”

“ I cannot sufficiently thank you, Mr. Seaton, and Fitzwarine too,” said Sir Everard, “ for your gracious reception of my young wife; but, believe me, I fully appreciate all your kindness, and I trust, Fitzwarine, you will forgive my former incivility to yourself.”

“ The cloud is removed from my white

brother's sight," Hugh replied, good-humouredly; "in Indian phraseology, the sun is no longer obscured; he will see the right path more clearly."

"Indeed, I trust to follow it also, Fitzwarine, and that we may henceforth be fellow-travellers on the same road."

After remaining nearly an hour, Sir Everard rose to take leave. He had scarcely left the hall, when the Admiral exclaimed, "By Jove, sir! she is a clipper! as pretty a little craft as I have ever seen under canvas. Egad! her eyes are as black as sloes, and from her quiet, graceful manners one would never believe she had been born and bred up in a gipsy's tent."

"She is, indeed, quite beautiful, Admiral," remarked Miss Chichester; "a dear, interesting little thing; I shall fall in love with her myself."

"Better not, my dear," replied the Admiral, "or somebody might be jealous," with a knowing look at the Captain.

"Well," said Hugh, "she looks very pretty

in her bonnet, but I can tell you she is far more pretty without it; and although she always possessed a certain natural grace, Sir Everard has done wisely in showing her the manners and habits of the world, by travelling with her on the Continent, and thereby improving her natural talents—

“As men to distant regions roam,  
To bring politer manners home.”

So now, Floss, my love,” addressing his wife, “put on your shawl with as much speed as may be, for I must drive over to the Abbey and back before dinner.”

I have little more to add. Captain Mordaunt soon after married Fanny Chichester, who became a crown of joy to her husband. Mr. Seaton erected a strange-looking edifice in place of his Bungalow, after a plan of his own devising, somewhat resembling a Chinese Pagoda, where he lived many years, although in retirement, visiting only his relations and the occupiers of Ashton Hall.

The old Admiral hoisted his flag alternately at Forest Lodge and the Abbey, and being considered one of the family, spent the greater part of the year with Mrs. Seaton and his pet Florence, who had other pets, in due course of time, besides setter-puppies, to one of whom the Admiral stood godfather, and bequeathed all his property after his wife's decease.

Lady Purvis turned out better than was expected by her friends ; and having presented her liege lord with a goodly array of olive-branches round about his table, she had now obtained complete ascendancy over him. Being, as we have before observed, a lady of great tact and accomplishments, she had made also a most favourable impression upon his aristocratic friends, by her personal charms, graceful manners, and lively sallies of wit and humour.

Sir Everard had no cause to regret his choice of Hagar the gipsy, who proved a faithful and affectionate wife, and by whom he had three children. Ishmael still con-

tinued his wandering life, although his tent stood, during the summer months, on the spot where his daughter first attracted the attention of Sir Everard Hilston, and where she was now often visiting her father and mother, accompanied by a dark-haired, black-eyed little boy. Caleb also, his brother, Mr. Seaton's ally, adhered to the customs of his fore-fathers, by dwelling still under canvas on the moor, although, by his employer's bounty, now become a rich man.

Major Sinclair (with whom Florence had kept up a regular correspondence), after a few years in India, returned invalided to England, having left the army; and by her and Mrs. Seaton's pressing solicitations, made Forest Lodge his principal head-quarters, his once ardent love being mellowed down into pure brotherly affection, which was returned with equal warmth by Florence. He would often remind her of the fulfilment of his prediction, when receiving her usual kind attentions, that "he should stand more in need of a nurse than a wife."

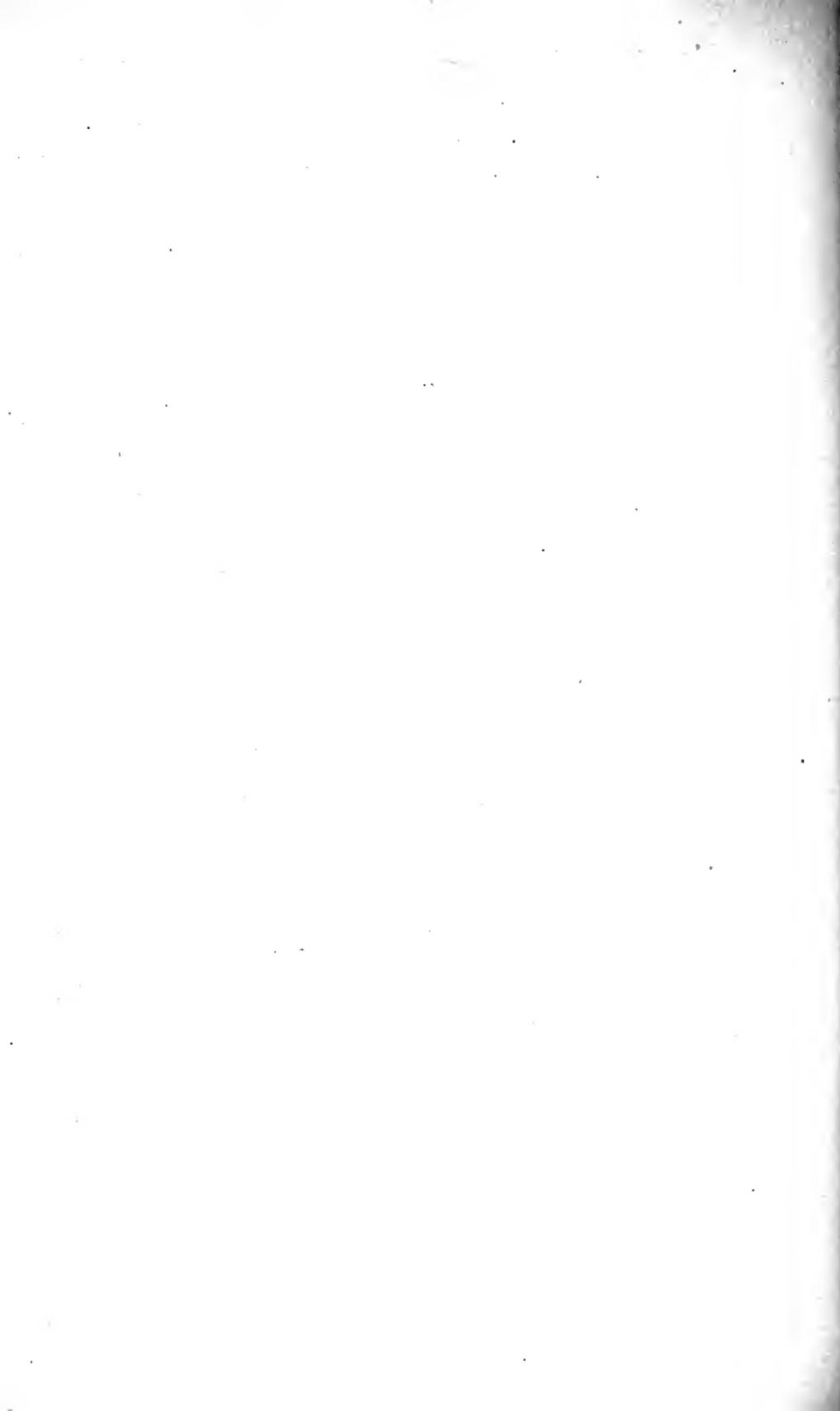
Herbert Franklyn, united to his constant Caroline, obtained the reward of his faithful stewardship, by being appointed sole agent to Sir Everard's extensive estates, with a salary so handsome, that he was content to follow this occupation without seeking other employment.

Of Chaffinan nothing was heard for some five years, when a report reached Heddington, that having purchased a tract of land in the backwoods of America (under another name) with his ill-gotten money, he was smoked out of his log-house by a party of Indians, like a coon from a hollow tree, and his scalp hung up to ornament the red warrior's wigwam.

My tale is now told ;—for to write more of the love and devotion of Hugh and Florence towards each other would be needless. They were, what man and wife ever should be, one in heart, thought, and feeling ; and as Mrs. Seaton witnessed, day by day, her child's still increasing happiness, she felt deeply grateful to the Almighty for defeating her own short-

sighted schemes, which would have involved them all in hopeless misery, acknowledging with Solomon, that “though there are many devices in a man’s heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, *that shall stand.*”

THE END.



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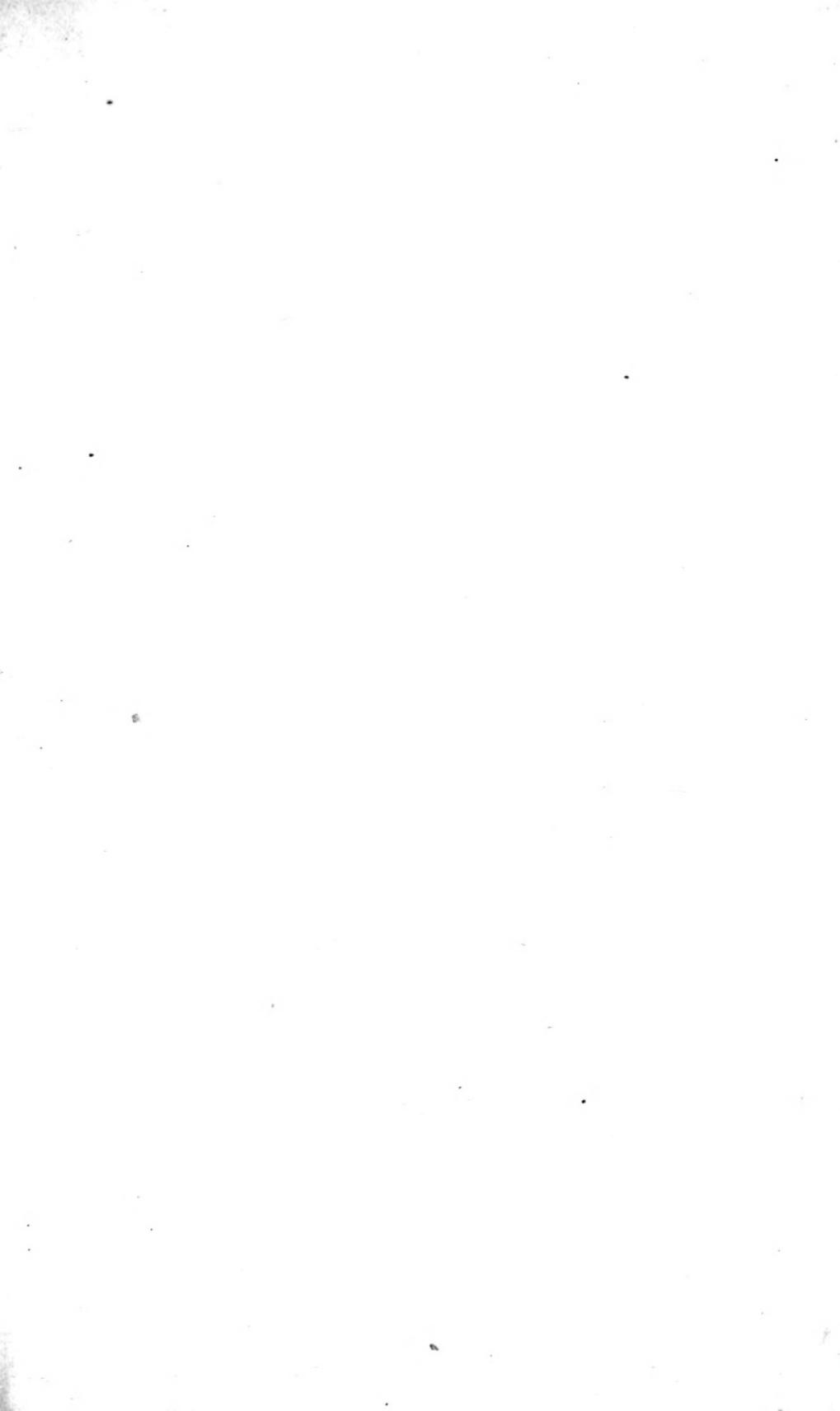
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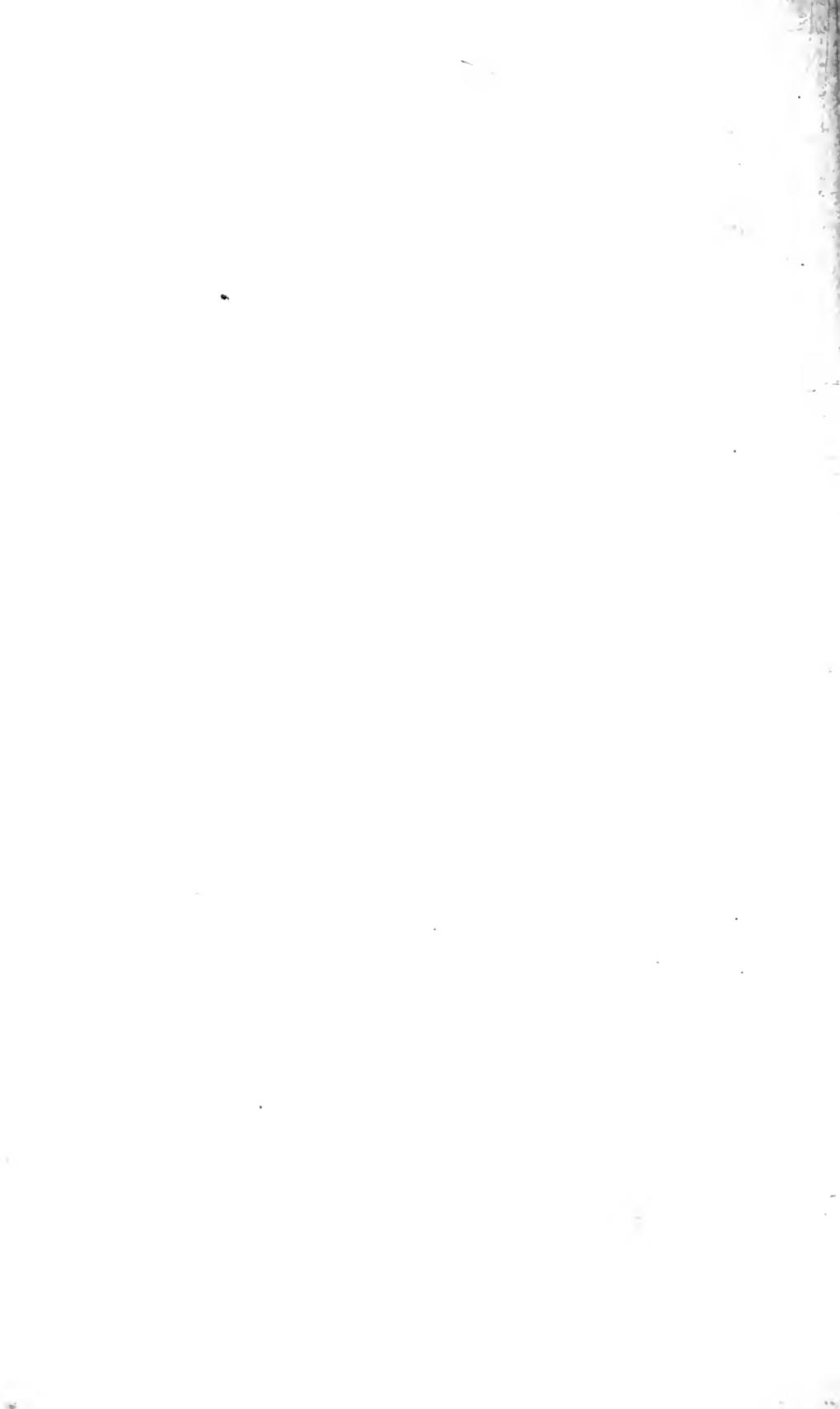
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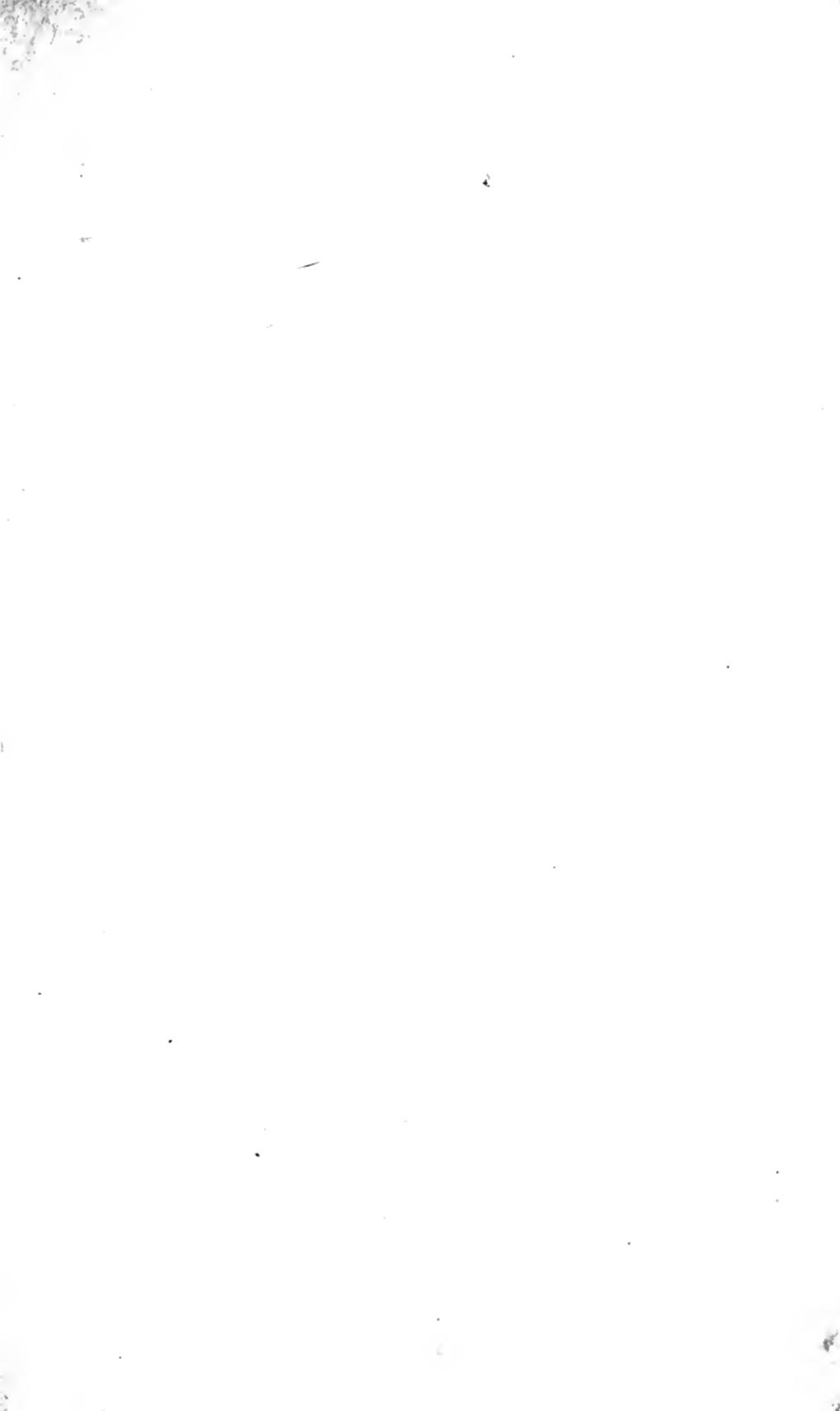
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